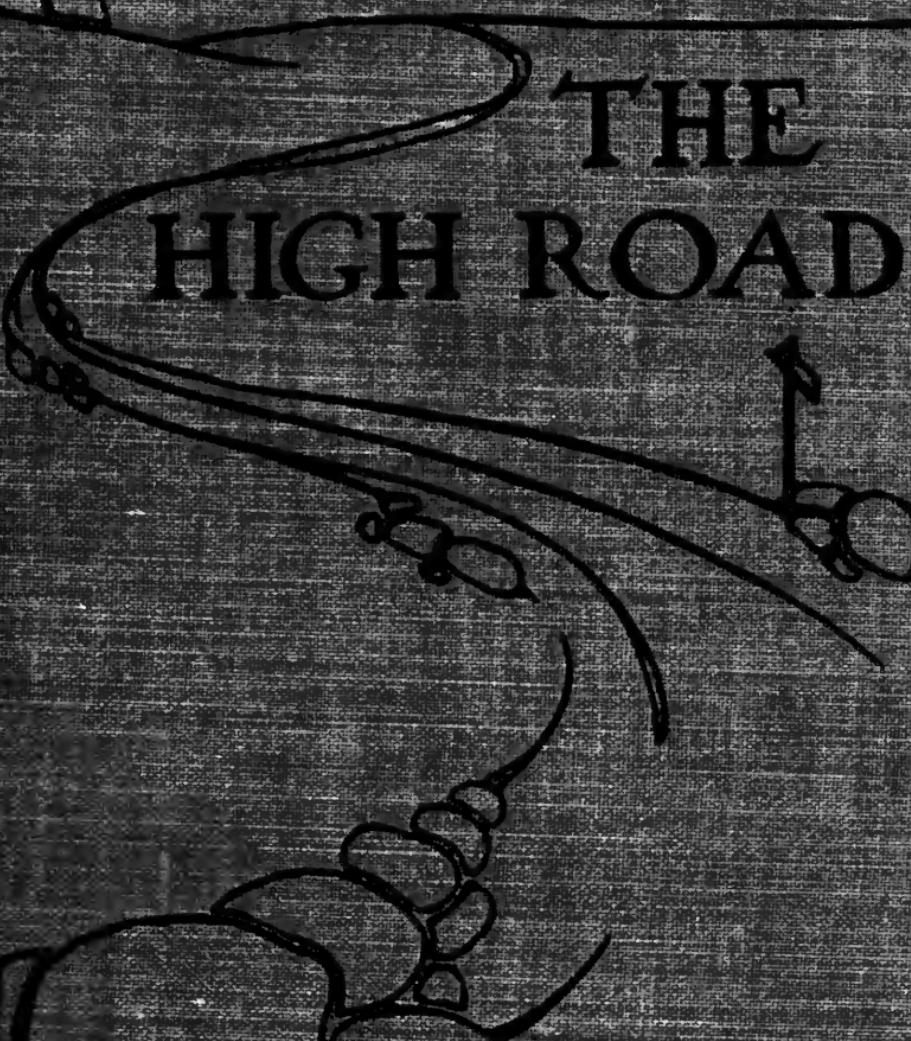




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A thick, dark line forms a winding path that starts from the bottom left, goes up and to the right, then turns back towards the center, creating a sense of a road or path through a landscape.

# THE HIGH ROAD



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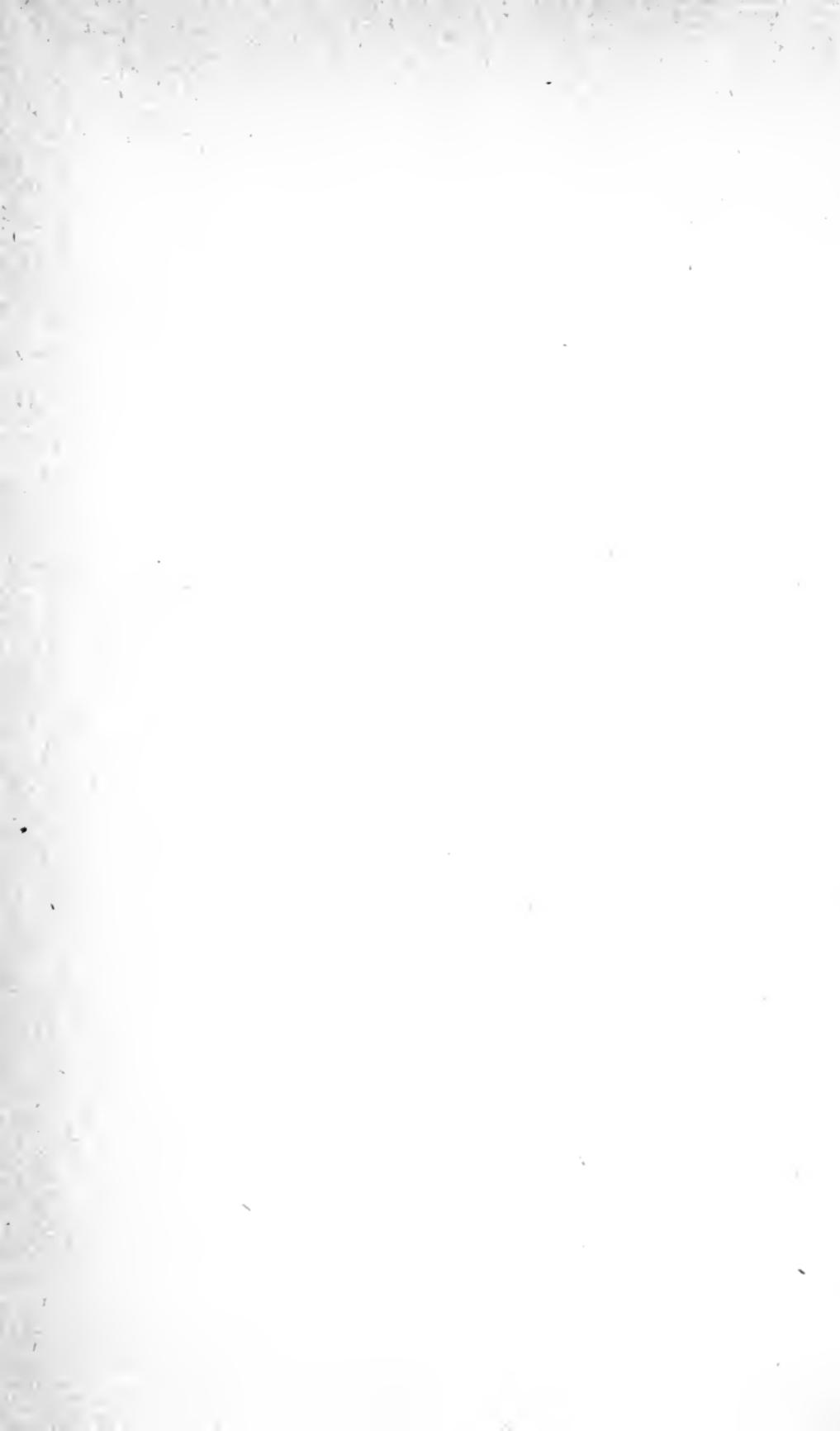


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LIBRADY









# *The* Highroad



*The*  
**Highroad**  
BEING  
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF AN AMBITIOUS  
MOTHER



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## PREFACE

They call me the most successful mother in New York. This summer, with my tall Jane in her honeymoon, I am left alone, and I am taking a holiday in the house where I was born, in West Virginia in the hills. As I walk through the fields, poor, grown up in ragweed and the white boneset that I used to gather for "bitters" when I was a child, and realize that I am the mother-in-law of an Ambassador, an Earl with old Elizabethan houses mellowing in the English sunshine, a brilliant New York lawyer who may become anything—and is now rich and well born—and one of the greatest of American heiresses, my sense of humor is aroused.

I am on the sunny side of fifty. Once I walked barefoot in the furrows of the very field where I am writing this, and dropped potatoes before my father's hoe! Sometimes in these late years when I have read the newspaper accounts of my "old Virginia family," it was hard to keep my face straight. But I did.

In this world the successful always keep their faces straight. I have heard people who have not the power to do so at the important

moment, bitterly declare that success comes only to those who lack a sense of humor. It sometimes comes to those lacking that best sense, that complement of the other five, but rarely. The true secret of power is to see your actions in every light and then to choose the point of view which you will stand by and from which you will cause others to see you. Success does not consist altogether in seeing, but in being seen.

But I will confess that I never encouraged a sense of humor in my girls. They never knew that we and our pretensions were altogether comical. They were real inasmuch as they believed in themselves—at least while they were very young. Sometimes I have wanted a confidant until I ached. I have wanted to go to some level-headed, “broad-minded” person and tell the story and laugh.

I have read a clever story now and then in which an Abbé figured. I have always had an ideal of an Abbé in my mind. If I had ever run across him I should have become a convert to Rome for no reason on earth except that I wanted a confidant. I could have been happy if my lot had been thrown with that Father Forbes, of whom Harold Frederic gave a bril-

liant picture in *Theron Ware*. I am sure we should have been the best of friends.

Having now no children of my own to settle, I would throw out as a hint to other mothers that there is a wonderful career for a poor, clever, ambitious boy in the Church. If my own boy had not early shown that the way of the world was his way, I should have put him there.

The idle class in America is made up of women, and of men who think along feminine lines. They want a confidant. The woman does not dare make one of her husband. In the first place, he would refuse to understand, or he would be worried to death over a "hysterical wife" if he did understand. The priest or the clergyman who can fill this want is a "made" man. He must be a celibate. Some women find a confidant in a judiciously selected doctor.

It is in the final and complete lack of an "other self," as the sentimental old maids say, that I am writing this. And then, I wish to see how the story looks when it is all finished. It will give me exactly the same sort of pleasure that one has in looking at her own photograph. I want to see how I look to my own critical eyes.

I here disclaim any idea of making a moral story, or a sentimental story, or any sort of story save a true story. If I neglect sometimes to write down the good in people and call attention to the bad—that, too, is part of the portrait I am making of myself. What I see reveals my character also. I should be a fool to "fake" the story of my struggles to present a more pleasing picture, to paint a portrait of myself after the manner of Chartran. I believe in truly good people, but I do not hold as an article of that belief that they are the only happy people. The successful are the happy—they and those who haven't the power to realize that they are unhappy. I should not "rather be good than be happy." Would you? I am—happy; and in this narrative I have not hidden my faults nor tried to explain them.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes said that any one could write one interesting novel by telling the plain unvarnished tale of his own life. This narrative is made after that formula, and I can only hope that he told the truth, for I might say with Montaigne, "All the world knows me in my book."

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# *The Highroad*

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## I

### *A Mother*

My father was the son of a hard-shell Baptist preacher who wandered up and down the Ohio River preaching from a flat-boat. My grandmother was reported to be the daughter of a Kentucky farmer somewhere near Maysville, who was fascinated by my grandfather's tongue, and eloped with him. She died when my father was born, and he, a physically weak little creature, was brought up in careless fashion among the people of the country who listened while my grandfather preached and took him home to dinner. I have sometimes thought that my grandfather, educated and in another environment, might have been that priest of whom I have dreamed.

My father never spoke of this period of his life to me, but he talked to my mother, and she has told me something of it.

He had no education whatever, as education is known to-day. He learned to read and

write, and, a little later when he began to "trade," to keep rude accounts. I believe it was horses at first, and then anything, until he had acquired the farm here.

I have often thought that had my father married an ambitious woman, or even an ordinarily "smart" woman, he would have reached out into the world and become a man of substance and it may be wealth. But my mother was simply a rather stupid, pretty daughter of a farmer. It is from her that the Countess of Truesdale, who is my youngest daughter, inherits her delicate blonde beauty, which causes the English aristocracy to look heavy and overfed.

Northern people, and even southern people of the present generation, have no idea of the position of the southern farmers of the non-slave-holding class before the Civil War. They were more surely outcasts than the negroes themselves. In the Virginia and Tennessee mountains their position was less noticeable than in the great plantation countries, but even there, "the quality" was a caste apart.

It was to these outcasts that my father belonged. My mother's people, by virtue of a dozen slaves (one family of negroes) were a

little higher in the social scale, and notwithstanding the fact that my father was infinitely their superior in every possible way, my mother's people held themselves aloof. This attitude was very convenient to me later, as it freed me from the clog of their presence and blood claims. I have noticed this often in other families. Unless relatives are very good, a distinct advantage anywhere, they hamper. As Mr. Kipling says, "He travels fastest who travels alone."

I was born just before the Civil War, and was old enough as it passed away to see that my father's sympathies were with "the Union," and my mother's with "the Rebels." I was taught by my father to sing: "Hang Jeff Davis on a Sour Apple Tree," and I knew that my mother treasured in the first place in her "album" a photograph of Wilkes Booth. I have that photograph still. It is part of our "local color," as southerners.

But they did not quarrel. My father did as he pleased, and my mother resented nothing that was done by anybody.

After the war the schools in our part of the country were improved, and by the time I was old enough to attend school, there were two

sessions a year, making in all seven months, and I was sent there.

The school house was of logs—heated by a big iron stove in which wood was burned, and the teachers who came to us were the rawest of men,—some of them men who had served in the war, and were seeking a way to fortune through the new state of West Virginia.

When I was fifteen the man who became my husband came to the Bethel school. He was then a lank, shy, red-haired young man from Pennsylvania, with what my father called a “wonderful head fer figgers.”

After the school term was over for that year he stayed and opened a country store, giving groceries to the farmers for produce. They brought their crops and then their pork to him in exchange for coffee and tea and sugar, dry goods and “town-cured” hams. Then in the spring and early summer they would buy their own pork back at a slight increase in price, giving a lien on the coming crop. This method brought profits of about seventy-five per cent, but our customers did not discover it. It was that sense of seeing something which those about us did not see that first drew us apart from our neighbors, and caused us to look

upon ourselves as aloof from them. It was that more than our prosperity. We sometimes talked of the people and my husband wondered why the public schools did not teach them more. We finally came to the conclusion that they are not really taught anything but surface book-knowledge. They can add, multiply and subtract figures but not facts. There appears to be a wall between their learning, such as it is, and their actual living. The relation between the two, which is education, is unknown to them.

My husband in those early days talked to me of everything. There was one man who amused us very much. He had a piece of what is known as wild land, covered with heavy walnut timber. This was before the day of lumber companies in West Virginia. As he could produce nothing on his land (so he said) he wanted to sell it. My husband, in bargaining, said that the land certainly could not be worth much to anybody, and the man finally accepted the offer that was made for it. Then my husband employed the late owner and his two sons to clear the land. The timber taken off more than paid for the labor and for the land, leaving my husband with the great tract

of new land absolutely free of any cost whatever. Neither the man nor his sons saw anything unusual in the transaction.

By this perfectly legitimate method of carrying on his business, it was not long before my husband owned large tracts of land. He was doing a banking and loan business in a small way, although his customers had no idea of it, nor do I believe had he.

New York is always wondering at the countrymen who come into the "street" and manage it "without previous experience." As a matter of fact, there are hundreds of men all over this country who are playing Wall Street's tricks every day of their lives, and never know it. When they discover it they come to town. The games have a different name in the country.

Undoubtedly had my husband lived, my boy and girls would have been very rich, and it would not have been necessary for me to make the efforts through which I struggled for so many years. But I cannot call them anything but happy years. I was like a strong man shooting rapids. I might go to pieces any minute, but then—it was all exhilarating sport, and if I came out into clear, deep water, it would be a

haven. I touched bottom and I touched rocks. Sometimes my boat swung in an eddy. Once it was all but capsized. A cold chill goes over me when I remember! I never expected to get out alive—socially alive, that is.

My two eldest girls, Lucile and Genevieve, are nearly the same age—as nearly as they can be. Robert, my boy, is more than a year older. They belong to my more or less romantic period when I was beginning to read books. I called novels books, and I never thought of trying to read anything else.

I cannot read novels now, but in those days I read Augusta J. Evans, Sir Walter Scott sometimes (I found him too remote, although interesting at times), Disraeli, G. P. R. James, and any other book which told of people of wealth and position. They were text books to me. I have sometimes wondered why I did not find "Vanity Fair" a great book. I always thought Becky Sharp a fool. Clever people hold their own. They make the world respect them, and they are seldom found out. I had no advantages of education, not even Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, but I could teach Becky Sharp things that neither she nor her creator ever dreamed of. Of all of them I liked Disraeli best. He

wrote of high life that he had actually seen. For every crumb of information concerning it I was eager and hungering.

At the time the children were born we were living on the farm in a house my husband built soon after our marriage. It had four rooms and a kitchen. There was a wash house outside. I "did my own work," as they say in the country, with a deaf and dumb woman who was a sort of dependent of my father's to come in and do the washing. I made my children's clothes on the sewing machine that my husband gave me on our first wedding anniversary, and as a matter of course my own clothes.

Our sitting-room had an ingrain carpet on the floor, a rug with a lion in plush in the center, a "set" of cane-seated chairs with a rocker, a coal stove. A Lady Washington's reception engraving (considered very grand), a "what-not" with some vases and shells, and a bracket or two decorated the walls. We called it the parlor.

My own bed-room was our real sitting-room. Here was a thick, and I know now, a beautiful rag carpet, white curtains, an open fire, my sewing-machine, my bed, the trundle bed and the crib.

We had besides a "spare room" for chance visitors, a dining-room and the kitchen. A bath-room? There isn't a West Virginia farmer's family in this year 1904 that bathes every day. Not one, unless it is some "crank" who is considered crazy by his neighbors. There are not a dozen bath-rooms outside of the towns.

A few years ago, I went back there to attend to some business, and an acquaintance of mine in Fowlersburg took me to see her daughter's new house, a modern "Queen Anne," not yet completed. Fowlersburg is now a town of fifteen thousand inhabitants.

"Here," said my friend, "is the place the book said" (it was a house out of a builder's book) "to put a bath-room. But Mamie said she would rather have a sewing-room. In the summer time they could take their Saturday baths in the wash-house, and in the winter they wouldn't need them."

And Mamie was a good girl and a good housekeeper.

I have kept my friendship for a few of the old people in Fowlersburg, particularly those of the old families. Of course my children have never been there since early childhood. The

ideals they have concerning the place and the people are perfectly beautiful. Let me beg all mothers who wish to be successful, never by any chance to wreck a child's ideals. If they once truly know what they are talking about they must be geniuses to make other people see the ideal. I myself am something of a genius, but I never brought one into the world. My children thought they always told the truth. At least all but one, and her lapses could hardly be called keeping up an ideal.

## II

### *Early Days in Fowlersburg*

I like to linger on the days when I was learning, and day by day coming out of the general into the special.

The town is interesting to me as the scene of my earliest attempts to live after the fashion of the world to which I longed to belong. I wanted to be a part of it.

I often think of the crowds of humanity and of how few of us there are who do more than jostle along and elbow our neighbors. When Shakespeare says, "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players," he is not exactly right. There is a stage, but only a few of us are the players. The rest make up the gaping audience. Sometimes a clown or a columbine sets up a booth at the street corner, but they are the tawdry "notorious." Some of us are artists and play on the world's stage, strutting to heroics (too often) in the glare of limelight. We know that there is a place, often dingy and dark and unpleasant, where we put aside our splendors and sit down to solitude.

It is our solace there to believe that the audience at least thinks us real.

How many of us realize that the visible world about us is no measure of what is, but merely of what we are capable of seeing and understanding? Ghosts may walk for aught we know. Our poor little five senses are inadequate for our best uses, nature's grudging dole to us, mere pitiful tools to enable us to exist and work for that vague end she has in view so far beyond the limits of our vision.

Your real novelist has something like second sight. He sees the realities behind the trivial little happenings which divert the commonplace minds. Life is a sleight-of-hand magician who plays her tricks while she fastens your attention somewhere else than on her object. The novelist, like Balzac or Hardy, smiles grimly and points out the machinery.

I had from the beginning the wish to be one of those who played. I am not a remarkable woman to look at. I have always tried not to be. In those early years in Fowlersburg it was my ambition to win a solid foundation of respect and a place. I did not want one woman ever to remember that her husband's eyes had rested upon me with the sort of admiration that

all women love for themselves and hate for another; but I wanted to be known.

When we decided to leave the farm and go into town to live, I thought the matter over very carefully. My husband said that he wanted to go because he intended to open a general store there to dispose of the country produce that came in. By this time he had a chain of country stores through what are known as the "back counties" in West Virginia. And he also wanted to send the children to school as they grew a little larger. "Give them advantages," he said.

Lucile and Genevieve were five and six, Robert was seven, and Jane a baby.

I lay awake a good many nights turning over in my mind this change of residence. I knew absolutely nobody in Fowlersburg. It was this which finally caused me to go there—this, and the fact that I was little hampered by relatives. My father had no kinfolk that I knew. My mother had plenty, but they were, like her, quiet, shy people, who bothered nobody, and least of all my father's family. In these days my father and mother had acquired a taste which made them happy and contented alone. The old *New York Ledger* was then edited by

Robert Bonner, who published every week installments of novels by Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Mrs. Harriet Lewis and other romance writers of that school. Four of these stories were published weekly. Besides, there were editorials by Henry Ward Beecher and James Parton, a correspondence column, and some short stories. It is impossible to tell this generation anything about the fascination of the old *New York Ledger*.

My father and mother found sufficient amusement in keeping four intricate plots in their heads from week to week. I believe that not half as many farmer's wives went to the insane asylum in the days of the *Ledger*.

I remember once going up home (my father's house was always "home") and finding father churning, with half the *Ledger* in one hand while he worked the dasher up and down with the other, and mother kneading bread, with the other half of the paper propped up behind the bread board. They always cut it in two when it came, and drew straws which should have the part containing Mrs. Southworth's story. When they had finished it I borrowed it and read it myself.

I did not tell my husband why I hesitated

about going to Fowlersburg. There are some things a man cannot understand. I told him that I loved the country and my little home—which was true. I had my work and my dreams.

I hardly know whether it was in the *Ledger* or in some of the English novels in cheap editions that I was beginning to get my hands on, that I learned that a "tradesman" was not a social personage. To me a tradesman meant one thing: a storekeeper. I was trying to figure out some way in which we could slip away from that odium. Naturally I did not tell my husband that.

Finally, one night, I had an idea. It was never my way to give my husband a joggle, waken him out of a sound sleep and expect him to discuss matters. He was a good husband, but I doubt if there is any man sufficiently perfect to enjoy that. But I felt that I must talk about it now. I arose from my bed, put on a pair of knitted slippers and a blue quilted dressing gown which I kept for slight illnesses, lighted the lamp and sat down by the fire. By this time, naturally, my husband was awake.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked anxiously.  
"Are you sick?"

"I have a suffocating feeling," I said. "It hurt me to lie down."

By this time he was over the side of the bed inquiring if I wanted the doctor. I was seldom ill, and it frightened him thoroughly awake.

I said I was not ill. It was but a passing unhappiness, and he must go to sleep. In the effort to keep me from thinking I was ill, he began to talk—and in five minutes I was making my suggestions. He was in the humor to agree with me on any subject. Like all men whose whole happiness lies in their homes, a fear of illness in the wife is potent. Silly women, learning that, wear it out.

In an hour we had agreed that instead of having a general retail store in Fowlersburg, we were to have a wholesale house, principally for tobacco, barrel staves and "ties" (the blocks of wood on which railroads are laid). I proved to my husband that his brain was so great that he should use it in making other men do the petty detail of work.

When we went back to bed my suffocation was gone and my husband had a new set of ideas and a warm glow at his heart because his wife understood him.

There was one point upon which I was firm.

My husband wanted to build a new house in town. He told me he could now afford a home which would cost five thousand dollars, and he had talked to Mr. Gallison, the chief carpenter in Fowlersburg who built all its houses, about making a plan. But I begged that just now he would not take five thousand dollars from his capital. With his cleverness that five thousand dollars would increase faster than it would in real estate.

The fact was, I knew that when a man buys a home or builds one, he is reluctant to move. I meant to know the town before I settled in one spot for a long term of years.

In going to Fowlersburg there was another question—the Church. My people naturally went to the Baptist church when they went anywhere. There was, however, no Baptist church in our neighborhood. Once a month there was preaching in the school house by a Methodist circuit rider. My parents had all the scorn for "sprinklers" that a Scotch Presbyterian has for a "Romanist." My husband's family in Pennsylvania had been Dunkards, but he kept no traces of it nor ever mentioned it.

When I was twelve years old, my grand-

father, who died the following year, took me two counties away to a Baptist Association. This is something like a Methodist Conference. Delegates are sent from all the churches round about, and as many other people come as wish to have a change of scene. The people in the place where the Association meets entertain them. I believe they still hold these meetings, and I fancy in some parts of this my native state, the entertainment is as crude now as it was then.

In this place where my grandfather and I went, there was but one house large enough to hold many guests, and it consisted chiefly of one big room and an enormous "porch." We ate on the "porch" and we all slept in that one big room. The farmer's wife, who must have been a very clever woman, sewed all her sheets and her neighbor's sheets together until she made one as big as the room. She had straw brought and put down on the floor a foot deep, then she made one enormous bed. The sleepers lay in tiers. Have you ever seen the painting called "The Conquerors"? It represents the great captains of the world riding through Inferno, their way bordered by rows of the dead slain on victorious fields. It was in such

tiers that we slept on Mrs. Daggett's floor. In the center of each row a man and his wife would lie side by side. From his other side would go out a row of men, from hers a row of women. I didn't like it. After we were all settled one night, I called out to my grandfather. I said:

"Grandpap, were they sleeping like this when Ruth got up and lay at the feet of Boaz?"

He reached over two ladies and a husband and slapped me.

I had read of nothing like this in my stories, and I imbibed the idea that Baptists were vulgar. As I grew a little older I knew that all "dissenters" were outcasts. What a dissenter was I didn't know—only that he was something that did not belong to the Established Church. I thought we had an Establishment in America, and I believed it to be a sect. Naturally when I found we had nothing of the kind, my impulse was toward the Episcopalian church. A church is a club that any man can force his way into. But I was cautious, I did not want to make any mistakes.

We went to Fowlersburg presently, taking a little house on the one central street. My husband had begun his business, and already

knew all the business men. As he was prosperous and a little better educated than most of the men there, he became very speedily a leading citizen. The town was small then, with one paved sidewalk and about three thousand inhabitants.

Socially it was fit for Mr. Thomas Hardy's consideration. The leading family was named Jones. Its founder was still alive; he was the illegitimate son of a roystering blade who was said to have had sons enough on the right and left hands in his congressional district to send him to Congress when he was fifty. He used to acknowledge any that were brought to his notice, provided they were good looking or "smart." He always declared that he had brought no "lunk heads" into the world.

The Fowlersburg Jones was acknowledged, and as his mother died at his birth he was adopted by his father's wife. Now and then the story of a woman's doing such a thing is told as though it were the unique act of self-sacrifice. In fact it happened hundreds of times before our civilization became so complex. Mrs. Benjamin Franklin adopted her husband's illegitimate son. It is an American

habit to furnish the generations behind with the same set of ideas that controls this one. It is folly to say that an American woman will do that thing to-day, although I have heard men call it "a womanly thing to do."

This man at this time was very old and had a large family of children and grandchildren. He had been educated, studied law, and had educated his children. They seemed to have a conviction that nobody knew of old Colonel (of militia) Jones's parentage. Heaven knows! They may not have known it themselves. If they did they had unusually thick skins. I have always much admired the idea of the old Colonel, coming back to the very county in which he was born to make his fight against his birth. The story couldn't follow him, because he met it on its own doorstep. But his family made itself an object of ridicule by the high and mighty airs affected. And yet, such is the power of assurance and audacity, it became the leading family of the town, although there were people there of gentle birth.

The story of that one family would fill this book many times. Old Colonel Jones married a farmer's daughter, who was clever, and her sons were clever men; yet it is a curious

study to see how the original pair, the royster-  
ing grandfather and the weak farm girl have  
marked the generations. One of them caused  
me a bad half hour years ago by suddenly  
claiming my acquaintance. She was yellow  
wigged and painted and perfumed and dia-  
monded. There is a grandson in the peniten-  
tiary, they tell me now. After all, there is  
something in having your blood honest.

There was another family, very intimate with  
this one in a surface fashion, that was equally  
amusing to the lover of comedy. Do not  
imagine that my sense of humor was suffi-  
ciently cultivated in those days to appreciate  
the situation at its true value. It took years  
and experience for me to get my glass adjusted.  
But it was there all the time for the seeing eye.

The name of this second family was Lossing,  
and it was what my father would have  
called "chief cook and bottle washer" (to  
think of the grandfather of my girls saying a  
vulgar thing like that!), in the Episcopal  
church. This made another example of the  
power of assurance.

Then there were two women, sisters they  
said, and the meek little husband of one of  
them who kept books while his womenkind

taught music and disseminated gossip. He was a bookkeeper for my husband for a time, a position which he lost very suddenly after I had heard the reading of my character which the music teacher gave. Poor things! Fowlersburg made the appalling discovery one day that instead of being Berlin Protestants as they were supposed to be, German born, they were Baltimore Jews who had dropped their religion as unprofitable. Never shall I forget the pall which fell that day upon the church which they had deceived. I shared in it, for I naturally became an Episcopalian.

## III

*We Take a House*

According to Mr. Herbert Spencer, each of us is the result of environment. I suppose I am one of the exceptions which proves the rule. Otherwise, I should give a careful study of Fowlersburg society at this time that the students of human nature (myself included), for whose pleasure and enlightenment this history is written, might see the forces which created me. These people taught me little except what to avoid.

I used to look at the women who had grown old in contentment in Fowlersburg and wonder. They were, some of them, women of beauty, with small but certain incomes, with fairly good families. They had a chance I had never had, and yet they had been content to live all their lives in a little round of gossip and housekeeping. They felt satisfied when their daughters married the first young man who presented himself. Of course I had done the same thing, but I had no choice and looked far beyond for my own children.

My ignorance was such in those days that I actually expected the people who made up the little society in Fowlersburg to live like the people in my English novels. These novels were my text-books and my only ones. Naturally, I tried to form my own simple household upon their models. It was a little while before I realized how different it was from the ways of other people—and how fortunate for me. They, dear simple souls, could not conceive of anybody doing anything, particularly anything so simple as the ordering of a household in any other manner than the manner in which she had been brought up.

I had two servants now—one was a nurse for the children and the other the general servant that was customary in the town. The wages of a "girl," as this general servant was called, ranged from a dollar and a quarter to two dollars a week. I didn't know that. I had never had a servant, but only a woman to work by the day. I had given her fifty cents a day. Naturally I concluded that this was the proper wage. My husband paid his men by the month. I consequently told the first servant who applied that I paid fifteen dollars a month. This may sound most trivial, but I discovered later that

no circus which came to Fowlersburg with bands and posters and parades ever so successfully advertised as I did by that simple statement.

This move might have made me most unpopular except that I was following my text-books. I asked for a recommendation from the last mistress and I would not take a servant without it. This effectually prevented my committing that unpardonable sin, known in Fowlersburg as "coaxing off other people's girls."

I finally by this means secured two sisters, the daughters of a respectable farmer. Indeed, they were of about the same origin as my own, a fact which I did not then acknowledge even to myself. I knew how to cook, and with the aid of a cook book I managed to teach the really intelligent elder girl ways which not only filled her with awe but sent her about proudly proclaiming that she didn't live with "common people."

I had of course supposed that society in Fowlersburg, which seemed to me then like a metropolis, ate its dinners in the evening according to my English novel standards. I didn't quite dare ask my husband to do that. But as a country breakfast, dinner and supper are almost identical in constituents, I had no

difficulty. The servants simply called the dinner "luncheon," and the supper "dinner." My husband thought (if the innovation gave his busy brain a thought at all) that it was the servants' peculiarity instead of mine.

It was the same with another thing which seems too trivial to mention, and yet its practice made a difference. That was the "Papa" and "Mamma" by which my children addressed us. I had said "Pap" and "Mother," but I had the children say Father and Mother, because the French Papa and Mamma would have been impossible of pronunciation to me in my country home. With the coming of the new servants the change was easy. They unconsciously taught the children what I told them to say. Does this seem too trivial? Believe me, it is of trifles that life, or at any rate, social life is made.

At this time we had a regular income of about seven thousand dollars a year—but we spent about twenty-five hundred—and were rich.

How I struggled over that little house in which we lived! We went into the house at the period of black wall paper and shaded rooms. I wonder if the memory of anyone else goes back to that time. I believe they called

it Morris paper, and it was supposed to have something to do with sunflowers and aestheticism. Living in the country and on old fashioned English novels, this movement escaped me. I had not even a friend to tell me of it. I never read a newspaper, seldom a magazine. I could only follow the lines of the English "cottages" I read of, and work in chintz. "The ladies' morning room" was always chintz with "bunches of roses" in my novels.

Entering now into a place where I could let myself "go," I also had a morning room, and it was done in chintz with bunches of roses.

In some of the early reprints of English books, were copied the good English illustrations by men like Frederick Leighton and Fred Walker. When these represented interiors I pinned my faith to them. Low book shelves, wicker chairs and a tea table, wide couches with chintz flounces, draped dressing tables—I had them all.

Nobody will ever know the bitterness of my mortification at discovering, when I went to return my visits, that I was all out of fashion, that I ought to have had black wall paper and a dark carpet, and dingy curtains. But I had the chintz and wicker and I couldn't afford to

change them, so I made the best of them. Like anything else you make the best of, other people came in a little time, to copying them and envying me the possession of them. They, too, most of them, had read an English novel or two (there seemed to be nothing else to read in those days), and "morning room" and "drawing-room"—finished in chintz—sounded as elegant to them as the "lark rising to meet the sun" sounded poetic when they read it in newspaper verses. That every room in my little cottage was morning room and afternoon room, too, was as unsuspected by them as that America has no lark.

Again I must call attention to that curious lack of application by the majority of people of what they know. My new acquaintances looked upon me as a superior sort of person because I had possessions of which they had read. Even the fact that my children wore white pinafores like those in English illustrations and had their pretty fair hair brushed down their backs, made them in a sense superior. There was not a woman in the town who could not have done what I did, who had not my information. What she lacked was the connection between information and action.

I shall never forget the sensation when I gave some callers afternoon tea, from my "drawing-room" tea table. My servants told me how they heard of it everywhere and people wanted to know if it was a regular meal and if we had anything after it. That was long before the day of wrought-iron tea kettles and the souvenir spoons which became in 1888 as general as upright pianos.

But these things were not funny to me in those days. I was blundering along after the only model I had. I knew these village women to be far above me in breeding, education, everything. I was humble before them. I had come there believing that "society" in one place was exactly like society in another, and I was trying my best to take my place by behaving as nearly like a respectable English duchess as circumstances would permit. I even had the conscience of the good Duchess in those days. I used to search my soul and dream of the higher life. Oh, how the comedy of it has come like a sharp scent in my nostrils since, half a pleasure and half a pain,—poor ignorant *me* truckling to the Joneses and the Mendals!

## IV

### *I Become the Head of the Family*

I wish that I could keep this narrative in Fowlersburg a little longer. There were so many people there that I should enjoy writing about—telling even to myself, if this story is never read by another—what I saw below the surface they believed themselves to present to the world.

There was Mr. Bliss, the clergyman. He was, I heard later, the son of a Methodist book agent up in Pennsylvania somewhere. He had infinite tact and a "beautiful manner." Sometimes he took afternoon tea with me and talked about the age of confirmation, or neatly demolished heresy. He was as easy in his acquired theology as I in my own new manners. We each had the air of inheritors. We played the game as solemnly as two children who are "dressing up."

We lived in Fowlersburg for seven years. I have heard since, many times, in many a roundabout way, that the people in the town who knew me "cannot understand" my suc-

cess. They call it luck. They remind themselves and each other what an "ordinary, quiet, plain little woman" I was. They give my children credit for having developed a wonderful talent for social conquest, and they speak of the remarkable influence of a foreign education and the opportunities for meeting men of title and fortune in the old world. I believe myself to be responsible for the breaking up of several respectable and ambitious Fowlersburg families whose fathers toil at law office or "store" while the wives and children live in pensions in Rome or Paris—waiting for my "luck." It is pitiful, isn't it?

They have no sort of conception that to be a "plain, quiet little woman" was my success in Fowlersburg.

My husband died.

His death came after one of the journeys to the hills he had been taking very frequently lately, and the typhoid pneumonia, which strikes so swiftly in West Virginia, had waited for a moment of extra fatigue in his hard-working life to find him defenseless.

It is the custom in West Virginia to bury the dead within thirty-six hours—but I couldn't. By delaying the funeral four days, I uncon-

sciously added another instance to my record of doing everything "in style" (as they said). They all knew that in the east (everything beyond Harper's Ferry is "the east") they delayed funerals.

My husband had been caught by death at an unlucky moment. He had made moves which he alone understood—for his methods of doing business had become swift, and it was impossible to consult me on every transaction. He had purchased wild land. He had planned to build railroads through the back counties of West Virginia where there was then not a church nor a school house, and where the inhabitants were as wild as the Scotch in the days of James I.

Mark Twain has accused Sir Walter Scott of creating the southern feuds by setting up a false idea of chivalry a generation or two ago, which has degenerated with the people. He leaves out of consideration the fact that these people are the actual descendants of the blood of which Walter Scott wrote. They have degenerated in some instances, and in some have remained simply stationary, giving the appearance of degeneration in the light of the present day.

I have heard old border ballads sung at a back county "play party" where they danced to the tunes they sang themselves instead of to a fiddle. They called the dances "plays." One of the popular ones is called "Over the Water to Charlie." They have not the faintest idea that such a person as Charlie Stuart ever lived, but the children know the song even to-day.

Like Queen Victoria, I date my later life from the beginning of my widowhood. It was an event that had never entered into our calculations. My husband was so strong, so certain. When in those early days I looked forward, it was to becoming the great lady of West Virginia. After a while we should have a place somewhere in the mountains, a great game preserve, and we should be the important people, spending our winters in Washington. I am sure that had I kept a diary then and recorded my day dreams, I should find on turning the leaves that I had destined one of my girls for a President's wife, and one for a Senator's wife. My boy was to have been a Senator himself. That was before the days when it came to be so generally understood that a Senatorship is sometimes for sale. Now I know that my husband would probably have

had one had he lived, and I suppose in that case Fowlersburg would have pointed him out as another wonderful genius with a poor idiot for a wife.

These plans were too great for my carrying out, although everything was left to me. My husband trusted me. As for the executors of my husband's will, one a bank cashier named Less, and the other one an honest conservative old lawyer who had once been the governor of the state, they gave me to understand that they feared that my husband's illness had been coming on for some time and that his brain had been affected, judging by his investments. They told me that I could count upon nothing from these wild lands. It was impossible to sell them at any price.

This worthless land became my most valuable asset. Everything depends upon the use to which you put a thing. The Kohinoor would not save a man from starving if nobody knew he owned it, while one could live for a long time on a few paste diamonds that people believed to be real.

After my husband was buried I insisted upon having the stores sold and everything put into safe securities, so that I knew my income ex-

actly. I found that I had from that source thirty-two hundred dollars a year. That was all. I had expected to have at the very least twelve thousand; and had not the wild lands and certain railroad concessions (if that is what they are called) been purchased, I should have had that. Outside of this income was the life insurance policy for forty thousand dollars, for my sole benefit.

In the early days I made my plans. I would go abroad and educate the children.

I could cry now at the pathos of my belief in the things I read. One of these that was repeated so often that I never thought of questioning it, was that living on "the continent" was cheap. Whenever my English families in the novels became hard up, they always went to the cheap places abroad to economize. I have never discovered any place on the globe any cheaper than Fowlersburg, West Virginia. They say there are some villages in Virginia and Georgia that are cheaper, places where you can buy a broiler for ten cents, and have a large washing done for twenty-five. In Fowlersburg a day's washing cost fifty cents in those days. I believe they ask seventy-five in these.

We had never built a house, so I sold my

furniture and we went away to Baltimore, where we took a small steamer for Bremen.

My forty thousand dollars added another fifteen hundred a year to my income for the present. I made up my mind, however, that when the time came the forty thousand dollars should be spent to launch my girls.

## V

*We Seek a Wider Life*

Ignorance is the most foolish thing in this world, but the proverb maker who said, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing" was a genius. We are a good deal like bread. As raw dough we are promising. Until we get so old that we sour, we may be manipulated into good loaves at any time; but put us in the oven, take us out half-baked and allow us to cool in that state—and we are done for. As for me, I was below the "little knowledge" state. I had been only near enough to the fire to rise a little.

If we had gone to Europe by way of a Cunarder, with its crowds of travelers, I doubt if we should have reached my destination at all. I think I should have developed an illness which would have brought us back to Fowlersburg. But on the little ship that took us out in late August was a German scientific man from Jena. I had not so much as a maid with me, only four children, ranging from eight to sixteen years. Fortunately, they were as

healthy as little animals and none of us was at all seasick.

There were but five passengers besides ourselves, and the four were ill the first days, allowing Dr. Helmholtz to become friends with us. It was he who told me bluntly that Germany was not the place for us, but Lausanne; it was he who made out the lessons for the children; it was he who told me that places like Lausanne were filled with ignorant English, of the stupidest class "to be let alone." (How I have blessed him since for keeping me out of the middle-class, although that was so far from his object!) He finally gave me a letter to a man who "might give me some advice for my boy," and headed me for Lausanne.

The "advice," when I reached it, was from a man whose original home had been in Hungary. He was a nobleman who had resigned his titles and given himself up to scientific pursuits in a villa on Lake Geneva. He had a wife—somewhere. Dr. Helmholtz knew him only as a learned man, and had no thought of his position otherwise. That he knew man as well as his origin was a matter of no moment to Jena.

Monsieur Prolmann, as he was known,

became, most inconspicuously, my friend. He was a man of fifty-five, who sometimes entertained distinguished guests. The English and Americans who gossiped in the pensions around Lausanne and Geneva hardly knew his name. His life was lived in the beautiful walled garden where presently my children played.

Instead of settling in a pension, as had been my intention, I took a tiny cottage, on his advice. Being in heavy mourning, I did not visit at all—which was fortunate, as I made a reputation for reserve which was most useful. The woman who was the social arbiter of Lausanne in those days is the mother-in-law of the steward of my youngest son-in-law's Devon estates. It would be rather awkward if we had ever been on visiting terms and she could speak of Jane's childhood as one of its monitors.

The next year my girls went to Paris to a famous convent, and it was my only regret that they had not gone earlier. A girl should come out at seventeen. The "new woman" may talk nonsense and higher education and all that sort of thing, but the fact remains that between sixteen and twenty-two, a well-brought-up girl has her best chances to marry. Men of sense

want to marry a girl of that age. They want to teach her what to know. If I were a man there is nothing on earth that would induce me to marry a girl past twenty-one. A widow—perhaps. She has been taught by another man. But the majority of women are bad teachers for their sex. I can give one instance. A mother almost invariably tells her daughter (when she begins to see that she is going to need advice) that indifference is the way to a man's heart. Nothing was ever so utterly absurd. A man is a human being, and it is the law of human nature that we should like those who like us. A man craves sympathy, understanding, sweetness, trustfulness. Naturally he despises a fool, or what he is capable of recognizing as a fool. We instinctively admire ourselves, because we try to be, and we flatter ourselves we succeed in appearing to be, the thing we admire. When another finds us admirable we at once pay tribute to his sense and taste.

My eldest girl would not be ready for society for two years. In Continental society of the best class, it is necessary for a woman not only to speak French, but to speak it elegantly. The suppressed smiles I have seen on the faces of foreigners when some American women

attempted French, have made me ashamed. Many of them speak fluently and confidently—servant's French. They have had nurse maids in their childhood and dressing maids afterwards, who have all described themselves as "Parisian."

In most cases the servants are from the provinces. In all cases they speak a tongue impossible to an educated Frenchman. As well might a French lady enter a New York drawing-room and chatter "h'aints" and "his'ns" or Boweryese.

The nuns in the convent where I sent my little girls were ladies—not very clever ladies, some of them, but bound by the cast-iron mould of their religious and social order. I have heard Americans say that they feared that their girls might become Catholics, and have hesitated at this convent on that account.

A nun who educates girls never teaches them anything which will interfere with a marriage to anybody—except a cad.

Monsieur Prolmann, kind in those early days, with the grave kindness of a great man whose word I little dreamed of disputing, had given Robert his own secretary for some studies. For others he went to a private school

where German boys come for French. Prolmann had suggested a lady he knew of in Geneva as a governess for the girls. I found that my little income was stretched by my expenses, living even in this way.

The first summer we made an excursion to the Italian lakes, taking the governess with us. Quite by chance we encountered Mr. Prolmann in the little hotel where we were stopping. I do not know why a chance encounter like this seems to give an intimate air to a casual acquaintance, but we all know that it does. I had allowed the children to play in the great garden of his home on the lake, had myself once or twice had tea on the terrace with the children and governess, and had once gone in informally after dinner to hear a great pianist who was staying at the villa. I had learned many things from Prolmann, many that I felt sure he was unconscious of having taught me.

I had spent that first winter in a feverish study of French and I had succeeded in at least speaking carefully and grammatically. One can make few mistakes in conduct when one does nothing, but still I followed suggestions.

This night, after our meeting in Italy, the moon had come up gloriously, and the elderly

governess and the dry middle-aged secretary had taken the children for a walk to a famous view. It was early and Prolmann and I sat on a balcony of the hotel. I had found crêpe a trifle heavy for travel, and I had on a thin gown of black gauze and a little white cloak belonging to Lucile.

Suddenly Prolmann spoke. I had been conscious for some time that he was looking at me, instead of the ripple of the moon on the lake with a scrap of a chateau showing beyond, the whole looking quite like the painted views with mother-of-pearl high lights which one sees on old-fashioned work boxes.

He was a most distinguished-looking man, with thin white hair and waxed moustache, thick black eyebrows accenting the pale lined face of an ascetic. It was the first time I ever had sat alone in the evening with any man except my husband and seldom with him. He, dead a year now, had usually gone to his office or to bed immediately after the evening meal, leaving me alone. And in any case he was by no means a romantic figure. He wore a chin beard. I am a creature of imagination, and I suppose it was because it was the first time that I so well remember every detail of

that evening over the lake. I even remember that the chair in which I sat was a Moorish one made of rushes which gave me a long slender look, like a tall willowy woman. I admired myself in it as though I were somebody else.

"You are very young to be the mother of two tall daughters," Prolmann said. He waited as though he expected me to speak and then he went on: "It will be a pleasant but an arduous task to put them into the world they should adorn."

"It is concerning their lives that I need advice," I said.

Prolmann leaned over and took my hand in a fatherly fashion. "It is wrong for so young and so attractive a woman to lack an adviser. I am going to ask that I may put my experience at your disposal. Had you always lived in this country, I should doubtless have been your husband's friend. (I wondered even then if Prolmann believed that. The thought causes me to smile now.) I should probably have been god-father to your children. Allow me to take that position which distance denied me." He was still holding my hand, and pressing it gently. Then he said softly: "I

might have been god-father and guardian to you."

I did not speak for a minute. I have always found that silence needs no explanation. I had two replies and I wished to choose between them. The first was a light sentence saying that careful parents did not choose children for god-parents, and as he must have been a child when I was christened, he could not have been mine. That would have done for some men—most men. They like to be called young when youth has past, however bold the flattery. But not this one. I chose my second.

"Oh, that you *had!*!" I said softly. "You would have saved me so much."

And my sense of humor did not twitch a muscle of my face. But imagine, if you will, this finished worldling, this scientist, this courtier, as the god-father of my parents' child in the wilds of West Virginia! Yet actually, there in the moonlight, lying in the Moorish chair, I felt my part of an interesting young widow who had suffered.

In his rôle of adviser, Prolmann suggested sending the girls to the great Parisian convent. I told him frankly that to do so would make serious inroads upon my capital, as the school

was a very expensive one. My income was a little over four thousand dollars. The convent would demand a thousand apiece for the girls. But even to Prolmann I did not betray anything. It was at this time that I began to make an asset of the wild land.

I told him that our estates were unremunerative—and that sentiment would not allow me to sell them. They comprised an area that was astounding in acre numbers. Considering how the ownership of the utterly worthless land put me into the class of great land owners in Europe, I have often wondered why such a possession has not been oftener used by clever Americans with small capital. There are miles of desert lands in Arizona and California that would sound just as well as the most cultivated farms—and a clever person can always let information get about. In Europe, where every decent American and some indecent ones are sized up and labelled, a little matter of a hundred thousand acres looks just as well as the title of an Italian prince looks over here. I think those acres impressed even Prolmann. He looked at me gravely and then puffed his delicate lips.

“Those prices at the convent are for the

bourgeoisie and foreigners only; not for my god-child."

He went up to Paris and arranged matters. A little later I thought it probable that he paid the bills out of his own pocket. If he did, that was his own lookout. He could never know that I suspected it. Consequently we were in exactly the same position as though it were influence instead of money that he used.

I was enabled to send the girls to the convent for one thousand dollars payment for the three. I took a lease of my little house in Lausanne for another year, and settled down with Robert.

The house had been altered for an American invalid who came to Lausanne to be near the famous Dr. Roux, and it was actually comfortable. An open fire and a bath-room were its distinguishing features. Ah! I enjoyed that winter!

In some subtle way I seemed to be more of a girl than I had ever been in my life. Girlhood is a matter of education with many. Some have it by genius, but the majority of the female young of the human species are simply raw, unripe women who need to be as carefully looked after as other unripe fruit. Unfortu-

nately a good many are of such a poor species, or are so stung by insects or spoiled by wind and rain and handling, that the proportion of well-flavored, handsome, sweet women is small.

I was a widow with four children, but when the girls were safely in the convent, and Robert was away with his tutors, I was as free as air and my nature seemed to be awakening.

I arose in the mornings and put aside my curtains for a view of the beautiful mountains. I had my coffee in bed in the French fashion with an end of delicious French bread and sweet, saltless butter. After that, I supposed (in my tale of the day) I went for a walk; in reality I generally threw myself on a broad couch before my open fire and read the French books Prolmann sent me—as well as some I purchased myself. Prolmann would have disapproved of some of my literature I am afraid. I remember his saying once that a woman might *do* almost anything, but that she must never hear or speak a word that was not delicate.

My little cottage adjoined Prolmann's garden, so that his visits to me were not the subject of comment to the little band of big-footed,

badly-dressed English and their American imitators, who called themselves the "English Colony." My servants even had been supplied by Prolmann.

Every day he came and had *déjeuner* with me—Robert had his luncheon with the tutor in the villa above—and we talked about everything in the universe. I wonder if I can ever explain how I felt toward him. He was the first man who is what the world calls a gentleman, that I had ever known in my life.

The training, the understanding of civilization, society and the rules of comfortable living which are crystallized into the gentleman create a charm which can never die. It is all the more potent to one unaccustomed to it. Even Prolmann's manners at the table were charming to me.

I have since discovered that not all gentlemen on the continent of Europe know how to eat even though they be most accomplished in recognizing what to eat. I have seen a Grand Duke whose table manners would disgrace a motherless school boy—in West Virginia—and the majority of his friends did not know it.

In West Virginia we sat down to the table for the primary purpose of obtaining nourish-

ment—and our whole attention was directed toward that end. Our food was good, but it had no more "rhythm," as Prolmann would have said, than the hay and oats in the horses' mangers. I was learning now that each dish should complement the other; that a meal was a composition intended to appeal to two senses besides that of taste. We thought in West Virginia, that a "course dinner" was "stylish" simply as a certain cut of skirt might be stylish, but I learned now that the element of harmony in dining would prevent serving all the dishes at once, as it would prevent all the keys on a piano being played at once, or all the instruments in an orchestra.

To be put into a gay humor, to be awakened to the zest of life, and to share your joy and play it in talk against the moods of others, is the art of dining as Prolmann taught it; otherwise it were best to feed alone.

Sometimes in the early days of our success I used to wonder what I should have been without Prolmann, and I shuddered, thinking of myself as one of the poor, silly mothers who drag their girls about Europe and expect them to make chance acquaintances of Dukes as described in the novels. They imagine that

the aristocracy of Europe marries after that loose fashion. Sometimes it does, but not the daughters of those mothers. In the rare cases where it happens the daughters do their own fishing. We see it over and over again; we read of it every day in the newspapers. The popular comment upon the Marquis who marries a music-hall singer is "Fool"! Not at all. All men are exactly like that, only they have not run against the attractive bait and the expert fisher.

Now I know there was no real need for my shudders. If I had not learned Prolmann's lesson I should have learned another. That, however, does not lessen my gratitude to him.

There was one object lesson that came to me under his auspices, which I very probably never should have seen otherwise.

He told me one day that he was expecting some visitors. It was late in the winter and fashionable people were on their way to the South, to Cape Martin after the Queen, to Pau and Nice. Prolmann never spoke of men and women with adjectives which defined their stations in life. He had never found it necessary. But I classified in my own mind. So it was with a real thrill in my provincial heart, which

has always kept the habit of thrilling notwithstanding the contempt of my head, that I discovered that his cousin and old playmate from England was the famous Duchess of Belcourt whose photograph, wearing her necklace of pearls the size of cherries, I had long admired. I was asked to the villa to luncheon on one of the two days she spent with Prolmann, and my girls' old governess was pressed into duty as my companion. Actually, until Prolmann tactfully suggested her in that capacity, I had no idea that I stood in need of such an appendage.

I found the Duchess walking on the terrace with Prolmann and another man, a tall, stooped, slovenly creature with tired, bored eyes. The Duchess wore a dress of cheviot, badly made to my eyes, and her lined, disagreeable face was smeared (there is no other word for it) with cosmetics, over which a veil was tightly drawn. Her figure was laced in, but with the thickness finding its distorted way into evidence. I think she was utterly indifferent to my presence, and I doubt if she had any clear idea who I was. But the man with her remembered me in after years when he was her husband—and a little more tired, a little more bored than in those days.

When I joined them, Prolmann coming forward to meet me, she was lecturing him upon some appointments he had made and some policy pursued not to her liking, for he was a Cabinet Minister of England, and she was an English Duchess who was supposed by an admiring country to be his adviser, one of those women behind the throne of which even Pecksniffian England boasts.

They were traveling together as they often had done in the twenty years since they had been friends.

At luncheon she paid no attention to me, but kept on with her talk of people and events and theories concerning which I knew nothing. Lord Hastings now and then spoke to Prolmann or to me, always upon subjects far from the line of thought carried on by the Duchess. She called him by his Christian name, and seemed to me to speak at times almost with rudeness. She looked years his senior, as I afterwards discovered she was. I knew the story of their devotion to each other. I had read it as one reads the chronicles of royalties, and I had to pinch myself to realize that I was sitting here facing two people who figured to those who saw them from afar as a sort of mod-

ern Abelard and Heloise. Could these be they? As I looked at the heavy old face of the woman, with the untidy masses of dyed and false hair above it, the eyebrows marked on above contemptuous old eyes, and at the man—the ancestral legislator, I almost laughed aloud. I went frantically back over my opinion of my own belongings, and for at least a moment, revised them. My husband had been something like this man, beard and all, only more intelligent. The woman, in Fowlersburg, West Virginia, would have been considered a type of cheap lodging-house keeper. And then I lashed myself for a fool. Was I to go through life with the standards of Fowlersburg? That was provincialism with a vengeance.

This was a great party leader of the greatest nation on earth. What was I? I, without traditions, who knew nothing—whose eyes were blind, who had not the key of understanding to enter in and judge. The glamour of their great position took me. At least if it did not entirely take me, it was no fault of my volition. This friendship I told myself, was historic. It was of consequence to the nation. "Nice customs to great natures bow," I found

myself saying. And then that envy of the world I was born outside of, came to me. What must it mean to be in that rare world above the laws of conventionality,—laws, which I saw in that hour, are created by those above them that those beneath may stand solid and uphold the structure upon which the great disport themselves.

I tried to express something of this to Prolmann the day after they left. We sat at *déjeuner* in my sunny little sitting-room, with the white-topped Swiss mountains outside. He gave one of his unusual smiles, which was like a breaking up of his face, so much of the humorous man of the world did it show behind the impassive mask which he usually carried like a blank wall against curiosity. Prolmann's teeth were beautiful, and I realized at times like these that at some time, some woman might have passionately loved that man behind. It was with my reason I knew this, however. He never struck the hour of my heart. Now he leaned over my little round table, glistening with the beautiful light silver and glass, most of which he had given to me.

"Catherine is my cousin. We are friends from youth. A shrewder bargainer and a less

intelligent human being never lived. Poor Hastings."

"But," I said, "She seems such a remarkable help to him. She has such a knowledge of affairs."

"She has not even the wit to repeat to him what she has heard him say. Most women know as much as that."

"But—?" I stammered over my next question.

"But why does he still attach himself? Because he would be cut if he did not. Because he wants to continue in office. He would not be forgiven if he dropped away. In this world a man must be true to something." He hesitated a moment and the smile faded. "They allow more latitude to a woman. Hastings is paying a debt of honor contracted twenty years ago and he must pay it until the Duke of Belcourt is dead. Then he will be free."

I suppose my eyes were puzzled.

"Then he may marry her and go his own way."

In that winter I used to walk as high up on the mountains as I dared to go. It seemed to me that I could not breathe as long as there was

anything above me. I must climb even into dangerous places. It was with delight that I realized my own sure-footedness, my coolness of head.

The following summer Prolmann told me that he was growing old (as a matter of fact he was younger in every way than when I had first known him), and that his physician had ordered him to take a long yachting trip to Norway and the Hebrides. He asked that, in the capacity of his god-daughter, I would come with him. Robert would go for a tour with the secretary, and I, with a new maid (my old one was subject to seasickness), went. This plan was carried out for another summer, and then—I found myself a little bored.

Prolmann had taught me much which I desired to use. What was the need of longer spending my days in idle dreaming and in as idle practicing upon my teacher? And—I was a little bored. I exulted in the feeling when I discovered it in myself. This wonderful, brilliant man of the world had brought me to the stage where he could teach me nothing more, and he bored me.

One day near the end of our second summer, he told me that he was negotiating with his

wife's people for a divorce. I thought rapidly. Undoubtedly a marriage with Prolmann would give me a large fortune, but—was it worth while? Would I not be considered somewhat in the light of an adventuress?

An unknown woman is always considered to have been an adventuress when she marries a conspicuous man. And while Prolmann had discarded his title and was living in retirement, any act of his, such as a marriage following a divorce, would bring up his whole history—and mine. And—he bored me.

I told him that to me divorce seems the violation of a sacrament, and I begged him for the sake of his soul to reconsider the matter.

The next remark he made was wide of the subject, and that autumn I went to Paris to be near the girls and prepare the way for Lucile's debut into the world. He gave me many letters and the arrangement at the convent went on as before. We carried on a correspondence of a semi-formal character with long lapses.

I was foolish to let Prolmann get away from me then. His arm would have saved me much in the succeeding years, but it was the first time I had ever been truly bored and I was fascinated by the experience and inclined to in-

dulge it. I had practically saved two years' income also, and my "god-father" had presented me with some magnificent jewels.

He showed his spirit by sending each of the elder girls a pearl necklace on her marriage—and keeping an eye on Robert's early education.

## VI

*In Paris*

My first idea in going to Paris was to stay a while in the convent where my girls were. But I thought better of that. I did not want the nuns to be too explicit concerning the cost of their charges. They were paid through my bankers in Paris, and—I had nothing to do with it.

I could not go to a pension. I had learned by this time how it marked a woman, gave her undesirable acquaintances, and was altogether the wrong road to the goal I had set out to reach. I lived at a quiet little hotel with my maid for a week, and then set about reaping the harvest of the letters Prolmann had given me. I had no scruples whatever in opening them, but they told me nothing. They were of the most formal description. But my first visitor gave me a clue to what Prolmann had sent out privately.

She was a Viennese, an old woman with a sad face, more like an old hound's than any-

thing else I can think of. The old-fashioned way in which she wore her hair carried out the idea. The mouse-colored wings on her cheeks were like a hound's ears. But in the lobes of her ears were beautiful rubies of enormous value, and on the delicate old hands, encased in lace mitts, were stones in dim, worn, deep settings that made the flashy shallow diamonds we see nowadays seem like vulgar paste. Her gown was made with an overskirt and her bonnet had wide strings.

She rose and bowed stiffly when I entered, and said in beautiful French:

"It gives me pleasure to welcome the daughter of my cousin's old friend to Paris."

For an instant I was bewildered, and later I was confused as I realized that the old brown eyes that looked out so pathetically had seen my hesitation. The "cousin" was Prolmann and he had claimed me as the daughter of an old friend. He was a man of spirit.

"I, too, am suffering from an unproductive estate," she said.

I flushed. It seemed to me that Prolmann need not have flaunted my poverty all at once. But I have learned since then that the great of the world hasten to speak of their limitation of

fortune that nothing may be expected of them which they cannot perform.

In a moment I was matching fortunes with this old lady, telling her of the hundreds of thousands of acres which were "tied up" until my children were all of age. Actually as the years went by I came to believe in these acres as a fortune. Who knows? It may be true that there is nothing in the world but what we ourselves create, that everything is in our own minds. We all, who think, have had experiences which would seem to corroborate such a theory.

Madame Vestrine was a distant cousin of Prolmann. A Hungarian by birth, who had passed a brilliant youth at many courts with her father, a famous diplomatist. She had married against her father's will, making a marriage, which she told me with entire simplicity had been most disastrous. She had one child, a son, who was content to let the world slip by while he lived on his Hungarian estates, forever out of the world. I gathered from Madame that she considered him also in the light of a disaster. She hoped that my son would not so disappoint me.

I had left Robert in Lausanne to be prepared

for college. It was Prolmann's advice that he should go back to America to college. A man should be educated in his own country, he said. In no other way could he understand his people.

Madame Vestrine invited me to her house, or rather her apartment in the Rue Miromesnil, the following Thursday, when she would have some of her old friends between the hours of four and six.

I went, and here it may be interesting to tell of the *ménage* of this old aristocrat, whose birth gave her access to the Vienna court circle, and who, I learned later, had been one of the great ladies who had snubbed the young Empress and added so much to the misery of her unhappy life. One could not understand so simple and kind a creature hurting any one—at first. Later I came to see that presumption was the one thing which found her inflexible. It was always more or less a source of amusement to me that she did not always recognize it. She knew the ways of her caste, as all true aristocrats, but what she did not know were the ways of the casteless.

Sooner or later some queer people found their way into her little *salon*, and it was I who weeded them out.

This first afternoon, I was a trifle early, and I discovered Madame talking to a curious pop-eyed Belgian, who was quite frankly relating an anecdote concerning the supposed claimant of the Bonapartist party. It was not a pleasant anecdote.

"The worst of it was," the Belgian said, "it took place before his innocent children. The man is impossible."

And then I made one of my early blunders.

"His children?" I asked, as innocently as one of them. "I did not know that the Prince was married?"

"Nor is he," was the reply. "Not even morganatically, I believe. He has put his children in a very unpleasant position and there was no necessity for it. It is impossible to vitiate the blood of the Bonapartes."

This gentleman's card was on a table near me and I saw it then and many times later. His name was followed by the Roman numbers IV. They puzzled me then, but later I learned that an ancestor of his had been a friend of Henry IV. of France. The reason of the friendship would have supplied Mr. Stanley Weyman's readers with a long novel, had he ever had as free access to it as he had to

Sully's diary, out of which his best tales are made. It was a gay mixture of intrigue, comedy, farce and tragedy. It smelled of blood and musk and garlic after the fashion of all intimate things of Navarre. When it was over and I suppose the lady was done with and safely out of the way (married to the friend after the fashion of the day, for aught I know), Henry in his love and gratitude gave part of his name to the friend, and his children wear it to this day.

I could but think how surprised Henry would be to see that the strain hadn't lasted better. But then—there are the Bourbons!

The apartment of Madame Vestrine might have been a little corner of one of the new apartment houses in New York, except that the conveniences were lacking. It consisted of a tiny *salon*, two bed-rooms, and in the place where a bath would be in New York was a tiny kitchen. The antiquated maid slept in the kitchen.

The walls of the *salon* were covered by splendid tapestry woven in the Louvre before the days of the Gobelins. Gold threads as brilliant as if of to-day enriched the soft, old colors. Lace fit for a museum draped the

mantle, on which stood alone an alabaster bust of Marie Antoinette, given as a souvenir to Madame Vestrine's great-grandmother, who had been the Queen's maid of honor before her marriage to Louis.

On top of a writing-desk painted by some romanticist in garlands and *fêtes* and varnished by the Martins, stood an old miniature, waxy, yellow, faded, of a young woman, that I knew must have been Madame in her youth.

In half an hour the place was crowded to suffocation and we were given some dry sweet cakes and a glass of wine.

There were few young people. Here and there was a young girl with her mother, but these did not stay long. They were chiefly the old-fashioned sort of young French girls. One I recognized as a girl I had seen at the convent, and I ventured to speak to her. She scarcely lifted her eyes from the floor and said only "*Oui*," and "*Non*."

Her mother gave me a half-suspicious glance and before my face walked the two or three steps to Madame Vestrine and asked her quite audibly who I was. I heard Prolmann's name, and the Marquise (I discovered she was that) came back and greeted me very affably.

"Do you know Madame ——'s daughter?" she asked her child.

The girl gave her a quick upward look from her black eyes, and then satisfied of the correct answer, said:

"*Un peu, Maman.*"

When I asked Lucile concerning this girl, she said carelessly, "Oh, Lili! She is Genevieve's friend. They are inseparable and they plan all the mischief in the convent. She is a *petit diable*, that Lili! I tried to keep her away from Genevieve, but there is no parting them."

Lucile, I was beginning to see, had some of the elements of a prig. That makes a girl easy to manage in some ways, but difficult in others, and it is nearly always accompanied by a bitter obstinacy.

"She has a beautiful mother," I said.

I repeated the story of the beauty of the Marquise to Genevieve, sure that it would reach the ears of her friend and certain also that Lili would place the remark in her turn where it would do the most good. The Marquise's beauty had reached that stage where she would like to have it corroborated.

You can buy almost anything in Paris, and when I went about furnishing my own apart-

ment I used a hint that Madame Vestrine's room had given me.

I could not afford to have so tiny a place. I was not great enough to suffocate people, nor could I hang priceless tapestries and lace on the walls. I found an apartment in the rue Marbeuf, and was about to take it when I discovered that I had alighted in the midst of the American Colony. I fled as from a pestilence. At last, Madame Vestrine came to my rescue and established me on the second floor of a walled house in the Faubourg St. Germain. There were four rooms besides the kitchen and a hole under the roof for my servant.

There was a little graveled court where a carriage could drive in, and altogether it was gloomy and correct. I was obliged to take a lease for two years, and then I was allowed to put in a bath-room (at a ridiculous expense) on the condition that when I left I was to tear out all the pipes and leave the walls as I found them.

Madame Vestrine tried to persuade me to give up the mad project of a bath. She explained to me that the weekly bath could be brought in from the street (linen, soap and all) for three francs fifty. But I explained that I

wanted my daughter to preserve her complexion and the doctor had said daily baths would do it. She bowed to that.

"I have heard," she said in her tired, meek way, "that some of the Americans and the actresses use baths of milk. Certainly it pays to keep the complexion."

I made up my mind that as I could not furnish my rooms magnificently, I would do the next best thing and furnish "temporarily"—never forgetting that I was an American—of the colonial school.

I went to chintz and comfortable chairs and soft rugs for my foundation. I have discovered that Frenchmen like comfort as well as anybody. I have sometimes thought that it is for this reason that they so often seek the society of the half-world—tired of formal chairs at home.

Then, in the old shops, and later at Hotel Druot, I bought anything that antedated 1865, candlesticks, some pictures, china, a miniature or two—all English. I even purchased a number of old English books. These were my treasures which were supposed to have followed me from America. I even allowed Lucile to think so.

My mother died the last year I was in Lausanne, and my father wrote me a letter and sent me a crayon portrait he had had "enlarged" from an old photograph. It was a dreadful thing, but it could not quite destroy my mother's maiden prettiness and gentleness of expression.

I took the paper out of the hideous plaster and gilt frame in which it arrived and I carefully wiped out all of the drawing except the face, and that I smirched. Then I took it to a clever young artist in Paris, and told him that my only portrait of my mother had been destroyed. I asked him to paint a portrait from this remnant. I brought to him an old-fashioned silk gown, a lace fichu smelling of rose leaves, and a tiny satin shoe, all of which I purchased in a shop on the hill leading up to Montmartre. I told him that these were hers, "showing the delicate character of my mother, which I knew that his art could reproduce."

He created a lovely creature sitting meekly behind the frame, which made Lucile start and cry out when she saw it: "Grandmamma!"

I told her that her grandfather had sent me the picture. She looked at it a long time, and

then turned to me with something almost pathetic in her face and voice.

"I am so glad he did. I never understood before—I think I must have dreamed things."

I never asked what she had dreamed. I knew that she could remember the simple country life of my parents. I had glorified it for her by showing her this vision of her grandmother's youth which was not the less true to her that it was altogether false to fact.

## VII

*I Bring Lucile into View*

Lucile was at this time eighteen years old, and, if the truth be told, a perfectly commonplace girl. Her only gleam of beauty was in the red shade her hair had caught from her father's, but that was not a real point. Her features were small, her teeth fairly good, her figure was acceptable. Had she been left in our native land—and town—she would have been conservatively happy with never a longing. She would have belonged to a literary club where the members sewed on commonplace "art work," while one of them read good literature—something "solid,"—and watched the clock for tea time.

I went to a meeting of one of those clubs in Fowlersburg not long after Lucile's marriage. I was being entertained with some awe, which I could see was not a little mixed with wonder. They all looked hard at me as if to discover my "trick," and I think they were disappointed that I did not talk about Lucile and her hus-

band. They all remembered (to me) what a beautiful, interesting child she had been, and some of them hoped to see her if they ever went to London or Ludovika, where her husband resides as Ambassador. I hoped they might, but I doubted it. Lucile is not democratic. The wife of the new clergyman of Fowlersburg was president of the club. She was a large woman, reconciled to her figure because it resembled that of the late Queen Victoria. She came from eastern Virginia, the offspring of an English tobacco merchant of before the war and a Richmond woman. On the English side she was more than cordial to me as the mother-in-law of one of England's famous men—and a Lord. On the Richmond side she was a little resentful that any Fowlersburg woman from the looked-down-upon West Virginia should have achieved such glory.

But she could and she did assert her English parentage. She finally said that a monarchy was the only proper form of government. As nobody else seemed likely to deny this assertion, and as I myself thank the Fates hourly that I was born in a republic where I would alone have been a possibility, I asked her,

"Why?"

"Because," answered she, "Heaven is a monarchy."

Now that is exactly the kind of logic which would have appealed to Lucile. I wanted to tell those good souls how she would have enjoyed herself with them, but I feared they would consider that I was boasting of her intellectuality, and I wished to leave no corners for comment to hang upon.

Lucile's feet and hands, her neck and waist were what the shops call "stock sizes," as well as her mind and manners.

Many mothers would have considered her hopeless—but I knew better. The majority of the world is itself commonplace and resentful of anything out of the ordinary.

Nobody knows how I dreaded the coming of Lucile, because I knew that she would bore me. I had grown accustomed in these years to my own society. I made plans and dreamed dreams all day long, dreams and plans for my children, but they were like counters to me.

I suppose at heart I am an extremely selfish woman. I want everybody around me to be contented, gratified in every sense, from appetite to vanity (vanity is the unnamed sense), but I am conscious that it is because unhappi-

ness jars and disturbs me. It is my instinct to make people near me happy as it is my instinct to keep my house clean. It is more comfortable. I wonder how many people are like me, and if they were to speak the truth would say that a million Chinese might be tortured without causing them a moment's pain, so the sufferers were well out of sight and hearing?

When the convent gate opened, I took up my Stendhal, my Gautier, my Maupassant and their companions and locked them away. That was before I knew that Lucile would never have read them in any case. Her favorite author was Mrs. Humphry Ward, after she began to read at all, which was not until she was safely married. Before that she looked at the pictures in the English and American periodicals. She had a natural taste for *The Ladies' Pictorial* and *The Century*.

I had a pretty *salon* by the time she came to me, with an open fire, many shaded candles and plenty of fresh flowers. We had a dressing maid in common, who slept out of the house. This woman was rather high priced, but she was most useful. She could do anything from trimming a hat to making a plausible excuse, and her manner toward Lucile was

that of an old servant to a young princess. She gave an air to her charge.

I hesitated a long time about the gowning of Lucile. (I wonder if these details are tedious. I know they would not have been to me in the days when I was seeking information. I am trying to make this book as practical as a cook book.)

This was all gone over and arranged before she left the convent. For myself, I adore the garments of Paquin and Walles and Callot, but I have seldom had one. They are a little *en évidence*. I know that American girls gowned by these people have achieved coronets, but they were rich girls, not poor girls whose mothers were feeling their way.

I never saw a well-bred French girl in one of those beautiful toilets, I might say if I were "making up," but the fact is I have seen well-bred French girls in all sorts of horrors. They were never models for my original spirit. I made up my mind that Lucile should be a "type," and I chose that of 1830. It was I who made that radical change in the fashions which came about when the designs became known because Lucile was wearing them.

Of course there was no "coming out" or

anything of that sort. I had made a few friends, for Prolmann's letters had given people to understand that I was one of them, and they speedily discovered that I was not like the usual American in Paris. Lili's mother had become almost an intimate, and she took me under her wing and allowed me to share some of her expenses, although she was a rich woman. Had I been childless, I think that I myself might have had something of a career at this time. Once I was tempted to leave Lucile in the convent another year, but I thoroughly comprehend the folly of that. She must come out young and fresh, before time and convent habits had made her into an old child. And then, to be truly successful in my rôle of mother, it must be the only one in which I was known.

I succeeded in a little while in making Madame Vestrine our every-day companion, as I am sure Prolmann intended. It was cheaper for her to dine with us than at home, and still more amusing for her to have us included in invitations where we supplied the carriage. And here, riding as I believed upon the wave of social success, I made the first of my serious blunders.

## VIII

*I Feel My Way*

The set in which the Marquise de Malpierre (Lili's mother) disported herself was a gay one.

I have heard Americans speak of exclusive French society as "stupid," "formal." Nothing could be farther from the truth, except the middle class English belief that all French great ladies have lovers.

As a matter of fact there are very few lovers in the world. The connections between men and women are generally those of mutual interest of one sort and another. "Love" as the world knows it, is confined to the awakening to maturity in children and to some circumstances or temperaments which are a little abnormal. Habit can so delicately replace love that nobody discovers the difference until some crisis comes. These French women have men friends to whom they talk freely and from whom they hear much, but they give them nothing but talk. They are the finished flowers of modernity,—they understand their own temperaments and they understand the men about

them. And they have a lucid mother tongue in which they can tell them so without offense.

After the weather became warm and all Paris went away to the country, I longed for my little house at Lausanne.

At this opportune moment came an invitation from the Marquise for me to spend some time with her at Varrière, her chateau in Normandy. She expressly asked that Genevieve should come also as Lili was heart-broken at leaving her. I hardly knew what to do. There were Robert and Jane to consider.

I wrote to Prolmann and asked if the little house in Lausanne could be rented for the summer.

The answer was so long in coming that I had an unpleasant feeling that I had received my just deserts, but it finally reached me, post-marked Vienna. It was the letter of a sick old man. He told me that his own villa was empty, he should never return to it, and he offered it to me for as long as I chose. The housekeeper was there as caretaker.

I made a flying trip to Lausanne and installed Madame Vestrine with the two younger children and Genevieve. Then I begged the Marquise to allow Lili to join them there.

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Madame Vestrine would have some visits to make, but she was very glad of the villa.

I discovered a governess for the children, a woman well recommended, as I believed that Madame Vestrine would regard the children simply as drawbacks to her enjoyment. In that I was mistaken. She had grown old enough to enjoy their society. Robert became her darling, and I consider much of his success in life due to her influence. Having seen the necessity of making a boy properly worldly in his youth, she impressed upon him, as she had neglected to impress upon her son, the value of living in the world.

The Marquise and her mother welcomed Lili's departure. A grown girl who is not entirely ready for society and marriage is an anomalous thing.

The house party at Varrière was made up of relatives and friends of the family, of whom the most important to me was Comte Julien Malpierre, the brother-in-law of my hostess.

During the winter I had decided that this was the son-in-law that I coveted.

The husband of the Marquise was a heavy, handsome man, who ate a great deal, talked a little, and spent most of his time on board a

yacht, where his companion was said to be a very plain intellectual French woman, the daughter of the physician in the village near Varrière. The connection had lasted for twelve years and nobody paid the slightest attention to it. When anybody in the château had a slight ailment, the doctor was called in and was treated with respect. The Marquise seemed to be unaware that he had a daughter.

The men of the Malpierre family were contradictions of the preconceived Frenchmen, being pure types of the blonde Franks who conquered the Gauls. They were tall, broad-shouldered and full of vitality. They delighted in all sorts of sport, and were like handsome Englishmen with the addition of ideal manners. The Marquis talked with a deep rumble in his voice which reminded me of the bumble bees swinging home over the red clover in these fields.

The Marquise's mother, a faded old doll over-dressed, adored him. He seemed to be a general favorite and there was mourning when he and his companion went off to the North Sea.

His going left Julien as master of the house. I used to look at him and think that I could be

as silly over him as the Marquise's mother over his brother.

Everything seemed to be going the way I desired it should. The Count treated me with a deference which caused the other guests to realize the situation was as I would have it, even before I became aware that my hopes were not in vain.

Lucile was a lovely product of my artistic eye and the Paris dressmakers—and her own adaptability to the conditions surrounding her. Any young thing cared for and at ease is pretty. We had accented the red in her hair by a wash which left it transparent, and every night Emelie, our maid, spent an hour over her complexion. My jewel wasn't of the first water, but it made a brave showing in my hands.

The gaieties consisted of coaching (automobiling was not yet in fashion), yachting (before the Marquis departed), dancing and theatricals. There were several other châteaux near by, and when our large party was not making an occasion, the others were.

The young French girl who is conspicuous and is not yet married, what somebody has called the "*demi-vierge*," was just coming into

vogue then, and there was more than one about. But Frenchmen are not interested in her as a possible wife unless she is an heiress—even now. Lili was destined to be one of these a little later: the sort of French girl who has plenty to talk about, and who goes in for everything. But Lucile, even with her American blood, had none of this. She had proved to me that she was no fool, however, and that she had a good serviceable working mind. My grandfather used to talk a good deal about horse sense, and Lucile has it. Her practical turn has always been fairly well hidden, but it is the framework on which her whole life is built. And where is there a safer?

A good many people were constantly coming and going at the château, and we had a succession of visits.

Among others, came the Duc and the Duchesse de B—. The Duchess I had long wanted to meet, for she, too, was the product of audacity. I had thought that we might be friends. I saw later what a mistake that would have been. Each of us needed to be rock bound, to be bolstered by the solidest pillars of society. We could only injure each other. But I was learning then.

The B——'s had a château about fifteen miles away, where they were said by the American journals to live like two turtle doves. Little as I even then believed the American journals, I did believe that. The Duke had married the Duchess practically with no *dot* at all—because he was in love with her, they said. The American journals had been in the habit of printing her entire family history (with photographs) every time her name was mentioned. She was a daughter of a United States Senator, who should have come from Utah, but chose another state.

He had lived a respectable life in a country village until he was the husband of a New England wife, and the father of several children, when he suddenly took a fancy to elope with the village school teacher. Being a loving father, he took one of the children along. That always seemed to me a particularly pleasing touch.

He deserted the school teacher presently, changed his name and took up with another lady whose father (he was practicing law now) he was defending on a charge of stealing.

After some years and the birth of the Duchess, they went through the formality of a marriage, and lived happily (the story ran)

until he was nominated for the United States Senate. Then the discarded school teacher told the whole story. And here comes the marvel. He didn't deny it. He reconciled his two families. The western state cheered him and the legislature elected him as the remarkable man he was—but “stuck-up” Washington would have none of his daughter. So she went to France and married into one of its oldest families. How she did it, I do not know; but after knowing her husband, I think almost anybody might have done it.

They arrived at the château in their own carriage an hour before dinner. The Duchess with her maid went immediately to her apartment and the Duke joined us where we sat after the teacups had been taken away.

I had been talking to Lady Flora Hastings, whom I knew to be the daughter of a hundred earls, but found as uppish and pretentious as though her mother had been a housemaid. As I had no English friends, and as Prolmann's influence would hardly reach so far, I was trying not to neglect my opportunities, but Lady Flora was giving me as disagreeable a time as possible while allowing me to understand that I was probably wasting my time.

Now there is some demon of tenacity in me which makes me hold on. I dislike being snubbed. I am in reality very thin skinned, I cringe from blows, but I simply cannot leave a field unwon. Had Lady Flora been fairly decent to me I should have forgiven her, but she challenged my powers. Sooner or later everybody will show you their weaknesses if you stand and wait, and after they have done that—

When the Duc de B—— entered the room (a pale thin man with a dry, precise manner) Lady Flora gave a start as though she would rise to her feet, and then with a flush struggling under her cosmetics, she settled back into her cushions again and actually began talking to me in an amiable manner.

It is an open secret in England that the Duchess of Strood in "The Gay Lord Quex," was taken direct from Lady Flora, so she may be better understood by those who have seen or read that brilliant play. Mr. Pinéro husked her, as it were, just as Mr. Sargent husks a personality when he paints it.

The shell was beginning to crack a little for me, giving me a glimpse of the woman underneath. I took myself out of the way and the

Duke and his old acquaintance had a little talk together quite naturally.

It was all natural except that Lady Flora seemed never to have met the Duchesse de B—, and even while they were inmates of the same house declined the honor seemingly, for the Marquise never found them together.

The Duchesse de B— was almost as artificial as Lady Flora, although of a very different style. She was undeniably pretty, but it was the prettiness of Queen Alexandra: the sort the photographer has no need to retouch. Her hair, arranged in such fashion as to give a similitude of abundance, was tinted a chestnut, the skin of the face and shoulders was as carefully cured as a choice bit of superfine leather. She was not old, she was comparatively young, but she had gone into the business of preserving herself while she was at her best.

"Ah, my lady," I said to myself, "you are afraid!"

She was near me before we went into the great dining-room, and the Marquise mentioned our names to each other and said that we were Americans.

The Duchess turned at once toward me. I know that with her sharp intuitions she knew

me and my little pretences. Probably with her father's means of discovery she knew all about my "estates." A woman going about Europe with great estates "entangled" would interest a countrywoman like the Duchesse de B—.

"You are a Virginian, I believe," she said in a voice like honey. "Then you must know Mrs. Carey Page."

Evidently the Duchess thought I was too poor an antagonist even to play with. Mrs. Carey Page was the cousin to everybody in Virginia. She lived in Washington half the year, where she chaperoned those girls who had old families and pretty faces. Mrs. Carey Page knew everybody. I had learned this from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, which was sent to me by my father as a sweet reminder of home and friends.

I was only to stammer a bit and be smiled at—the Duchess evidently believed. Oh, no!

"Mrs. Carey Page is my dear cousin," I said suavely. "Have I ever met you at her home in Washington?"

"Probably," the Duchess said, still in her honey voice.

And then we looked into each other's eyes

with the deep seriousness of two cats facing each other on a disputed boundary fence.

We retired with dignity, and the Duchess came my way no more. The amusing part came after Lucile's marriage, when we were in New York.

Poor old Mrs. Carey Page with her frumpy, frowsy "Southern Set" heard that I was her cousin, and I was beset with letters from her, written on perfumed paper and sealed with a crest.

Every now and then, even to this day, a girl who sings or recites begs to appear in my drawing-room, and says that she, too, is a "cousin of Mrs. Carey Page."

IX

*I Am Asked for My Daughter's Hand*

One afternoon I took a book (that looking glass of human nature, *Rouge et Noir*) and went into the old garden of the château. It was the hour when every one had retired for a siesta or for the particular form of work which they carefully concealed from their friends, be it beautifying their persons or keeping accounts. It usually goes by the name of "writing letters."

The old garden of the château was one of the things I envied with all my heart and soul. Sometimes the longing to have it *mine*, to have grown up with old marble satyrs and nymphs grinning and simpering behind the bushes, with old yellow marble seats on which my ancestors had sat for my every-day companions, sickened me so that I could not stay there. Whatever the world might give me, whatever my wits might acquire for me, I could never, never have that.

I know that this feeling is impossible to the healthy and sensible.

Probably Mr. William D. Howells could dismiss me in a clever sentence about sentimentalists, but the sickness was as real as any realist's sea-sickness.

My only pleasure was to sit and dream of the time when my children's children might have places like this. I revelled in the thought of Lucile's little boys and girls playing perhaps over these very formal paths, and talking about their great grandfather who was a great and gentle nobleman. Good birth brings a tranquillity of spirit that is a precious heritage. It is worth a millionaire's purchase for his descendants.

The Count came down one of these paths and after a bow and a question seated himself beside me.

I said to him some flattering things suggested by my reveries, although it may readily be imagined that I kept the core of them in my own heart.

"It is a beautiful old place," he said. "We all love it. I wish there were more money to keep it up."

"But I thought——" I said before I reflected.

"That my sister-in-law, the Marquise was very rich? That is true, but she has no son.

It is a tradition that Verrière shall go with the title. Naturally my brother and sister will enrich their own daughter with their fortune. I shall doubtless, or my children, come into Verrière.

"I am sure," I said, "that there could be no prouder task for a woman than to make this place beautiful for her son."

The Count took my hand and kissed it in quite the old manner. I had a rush of maternal affection for him. He was handsome and he seemed sincere.

There was a pause, during which we each felt that we were drawing long breaths.

"Madame, I am sure that you will not misunderstand me when I say that I hope that it will be the children of your beautiful daughter who will inherit Verrière."

For an instant my cheeks burned. There are some things which we Americans never say. I wonder why. I suppose I would be told that it comes from Puritanism in the early settlers. But those Puritans were English, and they were hard-headed, simple folk who had large families and wrote down some curious things in their diaries. As for the Virginians, they were of a notoriously easy manner of

speech, yet their descendants consider it indelicate to mention posterity. Not only consider it, but *feel* it, indelicate. I had that instant been thinking of Lucile's children until I could almost feel their soft little hands, but when Julien spoke I was almost resentful. It hurried my words.

"I suppose," I said, "you are making a proposal for the hand of Lucile."

"I am, Madame, on one condition. It is best to be frank, is it not? It is necessary that the bride who comes to Verrière shall be rich. However much I love your daughter I should be false to my race, to the trust of my ancestors, if for my own selfish happiness during a few years, I condemned my children to poverty. Were I so reckless I should not be worthy to be the husband of your daughter. Is it not so?"

His manner was winning, and his argument was good.

"I am of the old families of France, Madame. There are too few of us now. I am, as my ancestors have been for two hundred years, an agnostic. We are nominally Catholics because it is necessary that the lower classes shall have an example. But to me my im-

mortality means the immortality of my race. I shall live again in my line, and I want them to be people of the great world still holding their lands and their peasants unto many generations."

"You do my child a great honor."

"I love her. I want her for my wife. It has always been my hope to be able to marry a wife who would be not only the mother of my sons, but my beloved. I am not like my brother—" He threw out his hands in more or less contempt.

"Let me think," I said, and we sat there in the vine-hooded recess, the little stupid lizards running over the hot stones, and a cicada calling out its news of coming autumn. There was a lattice behind us matted with vines, and a seat quite hidden from ours on the other side. The way up to this seat was over the sod, and therefore noiseless. It was with a start that I heard voices coming from there. I put out my hand involuntarily and touched that of Julien, and made to rise. He held me and smiled. Evidently they had stopped but to pick a rose from the climber.

It was Lady Flora and the Duc de B—.

"This old garden is so neglected, that I am

sure they will not mind our having a great bunch. They will look so lovely on my white gown at dinner."

Now surely that conversation sounded innocent enough, and as though *en passant*. It seemed a pity for the Count and me to break up our *tête-à-tête* at this stage. Smiling at each other, we sat quite still.

"Oh, Henri!" were the next words, "How can we bear it!"

"It must be borne. There is no other way."

I could see in my mental vision the dry little shrug which went with the words.

"Oh, Henri, how can you say so? We are both miserable. You with that American, and I with a man old enough to be my grandfather. Why should love and our own lives be denied us? *Why?*"

"Because, my dear Flora," the Duke said, "we are not in a position to elope. We must make the most of it as it is. We see each other."

"But how, *how?*" she interrupted passionately. "Like this, where I cannot even—"

"But, my dear, you are—"

At this I arose, but Julien drew me back to the seat.

"Impossible!" his lips framed

I looked a scarlet protest, but really I could not clatter out over the stone walk and let them know we had heard. If it had been only I—but Julien was in the place of a host to them. It would not do.

I put my fingers up to my ears and sat side-wise so that Julien might not see that the tips of them did not very seriously impair my hearing.

Lady Flora had not been kind enough to me for me to wish to spare her, for one thing. For another, I had never heard a real conversation of this sort and I was curious about it. I wanted to know if they talked like the people in novels. Lady Flora did. It was because she did it so often to so many men that Mr. Pinero caught her and made her into a type. But of course in reality she lacked some of the smartness of silliness with which the playwright endowed her.

"What is *this*?" she asked. "I want again the happiness of the old days in Ajaccio. I want the rest of my life to be spent with you, only with you—in some spot sunshiny with our affection."

"On what?" asked the Duke.

"Had you married nobody, or even a wife with money, it could be done."

The utterly commonplace tone of this remark of Lady Flora's following the high-flown nonsense of the other, almost made me smile before I realized that Julien did not know that I could hear.

He grinned.

They kept at it for half an hour, while we sat there afraid to move. Lady Flora seemed to be always urging the Duke to a divorce, to desert his wife and come to England—to do anything so that she could be near him. To her overtures he was cynical sometimes, polite sometimes, and negative always. I fairly gloated over that. He was almost snubbing.

After they had gone away, Julien took my hands gently from my ears. I afterwards found it extremely useful not to have heard that conversation. Had Julien known that I had done so he must have wondered at my subsequent conduct. If silence is the goddess of the lucky, deafness is her cup-bearer.

"I feared I should recognize their voices," I said

"It was that of a man who feels that he has given his wife more than he receives. It is

right that a husband and wife should be equal—at least in France. A woman is foolish who puts herself in the position of a dependent."

I looked over the garden again, but the little children of Lucile were not there any more. They had faded away like the rainbows we see sometimes in reflections from quite common bits of glass. Already I was laughing at myself for thinking that I could do it. And suppose I could? Would it be worth while?

"Let me tell you this to-morrow," I said. "I am a little upset now. I am glad you have been so frank with me. It is a strange idea to an American parent, but you are right—I am quite sure you are right."

"Then you will tell me now that I may be sure of speaking to Lucile to-morrow?" He was holding my hand as we stood by the little garden door.

"Oh," I laughed, "*almost* sure. I would like first to tell you exactly her fortune. And—do you not want the family lawyers to verify it?"

"Why," he asked practically, "should you deceive us? The family will ask that—but that need be only a last formality. I want to speak to my lovely Lucile, my pretty white flower, my dainty little bit by Nattier."

He was quite the poet and lover.

I went into the house and I was wondering how sure I was of Lucile—and—an idea that was growing in my mind began to fill it. I felt as wise as old Talleyrand.

## X

*Lucile's Mind*

I had a task before me and I hardly knew how to carry it out. I sat down before my open window and looked across the country which had suddenly ceased to be interesting to me. Only a few hours before, it had been almost my future home. My grandchildren were to play and ride and perform the tasks of life here, on this soil, in this air. In time they would become part of it. In a thousand years, I had thought, the lump of West Virginia clay that was I, would be in thousands of Frenchmen—leavening them, I had hoped. The history of France would be different because I had been. Napoleon could say no more.

And now, thank heaven, I know where to draw out of the game! But what was I to say to Lucile? I intended, of course, that she should refuse Julien. Nothing less would leave the child her assurance. To be given up and never to be told the reason might be a tonic to some strong characters, but not to Lucile. She was practical and not particularly

sensitive, but she was not a Damascus blade. I knew her limitations.

At first I thought of telling her the truth, but—she would never be the same again if she once knew that she was pretending—that I was pretending. It might, too, make a difficulty in the future. I brushed my hair and thought. Anyway, I need do nothing to-night.

But I did.

We went down to dinner and ate the daily French dishes, which are stale and stupid enough. The English have given the French a reputation for being wonderful cooks—because they know how to make bread and mayonnaise, and have the wit to keep fresh olive oil in the house. In reality French cooking is only really fine when it is done for Americans. The French are too economical in their kitchens.

The talk was smarter than usual. The Count in particular was brilliant of eye and ready of tongue. Lady Flora was full of the sort of mildly vicious epigram which she had learned from the various men she had known—not wisely, but too well. You can always see how men regard a fool by the reflections of them the fool gives out.

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"I heard some one say once," Lady Flora said, "that a diplomatist did not need to know the secret of his adversary. He need only pretend that he knew it. Everybody has one."

"Do you think, then," I asked, "that it is fair to use a knowledge of another's secret for your own end?"

"In diplomacy, as in love and war, all is fair," she said with an air of being original and witty.

Two hours later I sat beside Lady Flora on the sofa where she had spread her white lace gown, and I wasted little time coming to my point.

"I expect to bring my daughter to England next season." I spoke as though I were sure that this was the piece of information she had been waiting for.

She put up her lorgnette and looked at me. It was a beautiful jewel. The handle was a stem of roses worked in diamonds, emeralds and rubies. I took time thoroughly to examine it.

"I wonder," I said, "if I shall meet the Duc de B—— there. I hear that he is an old friend of your husband."

"My husband," she began, and she put down the lorgnette.

"You must sometimes find it very lonely with no young people near you. I suppose it is for that reason you are away from England so much."

My tone was full of sympathy. I took the lorgnette out of her hand in a quite familiar fashion. We were like two dear friends chatting there together on the *tête-à-tête*. It was a long conversation and most impersonal. I spoke more freely to Lady Flora than to any one I had known since Prolmann. I told her how I pitied women whose husbands were jealous and disagreeable, and how I would always stand by my friends. A woman who was tied for life to a man like that had enough to bear without the censoriousness of the world. I kept moralizing. It happened that few women were happy enough to spend their lives in some of the earth's sunny spots with those they loved. I was almost eloquent over that. Lady Flora became a little pale, but she was agreeable, and we arrived at something like a sudden intimacy, which culminated in an invitation to Lucile and me for a house party in Scotland that autumn at Lady Flora's magnifi-

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cent place. "I suppose," she said, "I must ask Comte Julien also."

"I do not know," I answered frankly, "Lucile has the American girl's privilege; I shall not try to influence her in any way. And, from all I hear, I doubt the advisability of American girls marrying Frenchmen. And the Frenchmen, too, would be happier with women more like themselves."

Actually the woman was so stupendously silly that she brightened at that as though I had paid her a compliment. She had been thoroughly frightened when she understood that I knew her intrigue. I could see her moistening her lips, and she had at once begun to placate me, to take me into her circle, to make herself too valuable to me to be ruined by me. She was even weaker and sillier than I had thought her; but she loved to hear the suggestion that de B—— would be happier with a woman of his own sort. She wanted somebody to notice (what was not entirely true) that he was unhappy with his wife. She did not quite believe de B——.

After Lucile had gone to her room I followed her in my negligee, and discovered her on her knees saying her prayers. I have often won-

dered how long a modern woman keeps up that habit. It is one that was never taught to me. Am I vulgar as I laugh at the remembrance that my childish nightly formality was washing my bare feet? I gave that up when I began to wear shoes.

I waited respectfully until the praying was over, and Lucile, looking very demure and pretty in her lace-trimmed gown with her reddish hair in two smooth braids, was between the sheets.

"Is it anything, Mamma?" she asked. "Didn't you like the way my hair was done? The Duchess's maid taught it to Emelie."

"I think you will never care to have it dressed so again, when I tell you what I have come to say," I said gravely.

Lucile sat up.

"What is it?"

"My dear," I said as I took her hand. "I have tried to keep all knowledge of the evil of the world from you, but unhappily it cannot be altogether shut out of any life."

Lucile did not look frightened, but puzzled, and then her face cleared.

"Isn't the Duchess altogether *comme il faut*?" she asked, "Do you know, Mamma, I *thought so!*"

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It was my turn to gasp.

"To begin with they told stories about her at the convent. You know she was educated there. Girls said their aunts and sisters had said that in their day she was always toadying to girls who were a little silly and would invite her home with them. They said her mother was *quite* uneducated, and—*used to pick at her teeth!*"

Oh these innocent children of ours!

"Was that all?" I asked meekly.

"No," said Lucile, "of course, Mamma, I should speak of this only to you. They said she got herself called 'the rich American' and in that way made some friends and came to know the Duke, and he was attracted by her—had—had"—Lucile looked away and blushed—"kissed her, and—not like a lady at all—you know."

"You wouldn't care to be married like that?"

"No, oh, *no!*" she said with horror. "Of course one would like to care a great deal for the man one married, but to have him care for you like that—oh, that is so *disrespectful*. I like everything *comme il faut*." Lucile finished loftily.

"And you certainly would not wish to marry a man who had that sort of "caring" for another woman?"

"Never!"

"Then, my dear, I must tell you something. I have discovered that the Count has been attracted by the Duchess. It is a thing no young girl should know, but I tell you because before discovering it, I had told Julien that he might propose for your hand. Of course you will not tell him that you know this."

Lucile looked positively ugly. Her nostrils flared flat, and her complexion became a dull red. I held my breath. What blood had I called out? What was there back behind us that made a woman look like that? Presently the blood went back.

"I'll not tell him," she said. "Do you think I would let him know that I knew myself the rival of an old married flirt? And —what can you expect? Her mother——" Lucile threw out her hands in an expressive gesture.

What do girls speak of as they pace the peaceful garden walks in their sheltered schools?

"My dear," I said, "the Count is our host. You will remember *les convenances*?"

"I am an American. I do not care for him. An American can always say that." And then she turned over in bed.

I drew a long sigh of relief.

## XI

*A Glimpse of England*

I actually do not know in what terms Lucile refused to become the wife of Julien. I only know that I felt I could trust her to make her refusal graceful and as the result of her own wish. When it was over, I spoke to Julien in a shocked and sorry way. I think there were tears in my eyes. I did feel it. I had wanted him, and I had wanted that beautiful and charming place for mine. We were *sympatica*, Julien and I, and it was with a nervous heart-ache that I relinquished him. It was not so much to Lucile. Talk, you romancers, as much as you like. Love is not paramount in the heart of the average girl. Her pride had been wounded and she was angry, but the convent years had given her a peaceful mask. She seemed distressed in a well-bred way—distressed that she could not love the man who loved her. It was admirable. And I? I lay awake at night almost knowing what hysterics meant in my balancing between tears over the

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lost opportunity and laughter over the comedy of it all.

Julien behaved admirably but I saw that we must go. The Marquise could not understand us, and she said so. She felt that I was giving Lucile too free a rein. It frightened her. She said she thought she must bring Lili home. If the American ideas permeated my entire family, there would be no means of judging to what extent Lili was already contaminated by them. I sorrowfully agreed with her. I was not in a position to make enemies anywhere, but I mentioned that Madame Vestrine was not an American, and as having Lili at home would have seriously put her out, the child was allowed to remain, thus giving me a continued hold upon the family. I could see by the shrewdness in the Marquise's eyes that she was holding me also. Genevieve might be more amenable to reason, and after the American fashion, one girl would be as great an heiress as the other.

I could see the curiosity all about us when we took our departure for Homburg. Those of the party who had been inclined to think us nobodies had changed their minds. To refuse the Count was a thing that only those sure

of themselves could afford. After all my defeat became triumph.

We went to Homburg because Lady Hastings was going there. Being two women alone, we did not go to the great hotel where the then Prince of Wales stayed, except for a day and night. He had already arrived and Homburg was filling up with the few friends who accompanied him and the many who wished to appear to have done so. Besides, there were the Americans.

A number of years ago, a certain cousin of Queen Victoria was a gay young soldier. It was hard to realize it that autumn at Homburg, for his lined, wrinkled, rather foolish old face had little suggestion of either beauty or gallantry. It is probable that had he not been surrounded by the glamour of royalty he would have been like dozens of his race, only a thick-headed, thick-skinned, middle class young man in that long ago. But he was the grandson of that puissant king, whom our ancestors derided, George the Third. At any rate he had all the privileges of gallantry and bravery and beauty, and he fell in love with a rather heavy young actress in a minor rôle at one of the London theaters. She almost died with delight. Vic-

tonia had not been long enough on the throne then for the tradition of the splendor of being a king's favorite to have died away. Of course the young soldier wasn't a king, but he was near enough for a poor young actress. He had a suite of rooms in the old St. James palace, where his widowed mother also lived, and with the delicacy which has always distinguished his race he took the actress there. Nobody thought much of it. William had made London pretty well acquainted with the train of ladies whom he honored with his attentions, and George the Fourth had preceded him. Even Queen Victoria probably considered it a necessary whiling away of the Royal Duke's time until some princess came out of the school room. It was just as her own father had spent his time before it became necessary to marry.

But one day the Duke's mother wanted to go to drive, and the actress had taken her carriage. She sent for her son and she said things that hurt his feelings. He went out and told everybody about it, and drank a great deal, and then he went up to talk to the actress. She told him that he could make it all right by allowing her to call herself Mrs. Fitz and going through a marriage ceremony. Of course it

would not be legal because he was a royalty, but it would serve. "So by this time," old General Steyn who told me the story said, "the Duke being oblivious to all except the fact that he wanted his boots off and peace, the lady, who had prepared for just this, married him."

The strong-minded lady kept him married. She was the man of the family and even defied the Queen herself, when that stern moralist wished to break up her rapidly increasing home circle. The son of the actress was a colonel in the English army, and he followed royalty about and gave some Americans a taste of the bliss of shaking his hand and pouring wine for the great-grandson of a king. They seemed to find it thrilling that season at Homburg, although the king was a poor old lunatic and the great-grandson was ill-born. One can see photographs of Americans taken with the Royal Duke's son, at the Homburg photographer's even now. They probably send them home as a proof that they are in the really smart English set. The colonel's wife massages faces on Bond Street in London now, I believe.

Poor funny old English royalty! It always has been funny since the Stuarts left, and nobody knows it better than some of the

English nobles. But I didn't know it when I reached Homburg that autumn. When we went into the hotel I saw a man in scarlet livery standing by a little table on which lay H. R. H.'s Visitor's Book. He had been keeping it since early spring in Copenhagen. It must be confessed that the names in it were not all distinguished; one or two were frankly Jewish. Sometimes an old friend had written a line or two. I looked at it, hesitated as though I would write my name, and then decided not, for the benefit of the servant. But I have written my name since on bits of paper which are actually read by the Royalties themselves.

When I saw the Americans at Homburg, I almost ran. Many of them were people of position in New York. There was one woman, who had endured there in the long ago something almost like bellehood. Her father had been a famous hotelkeeper. She had married an Englishman of good family, not very well off, and they were among those who are asked about to be amusing, but whose real position is one which the newspaper writers who keep her photographs before the public could never understand. She is an "American," and that is practically her entire distinction.

But how ignorant I was of all this then! I felt that these people could annihilate me, could tear my pretensions to flimsy rags which would never cover me. So they could, if they had known enough. My very shakiness kept me well balanced. Like a tight-rope walker, I could not afford to make the slightest blunder. Consequently Lucile and I were hardly seen until Lady Flora arrived. Then we went over to the hotel and lunched with her on the veranda.

"It is not quite the thing to do," Lady Flora said shrugging her shoulders, "but I can do it. I like to see the people when I come to a place like this."

"I hope," I said almost timidly, "that people will not hear that Lucile has just refused Comte Julien Malpierre. It would surround us with gossip, make us conspicuous. It would be very unfortunate."

Lady Flora opened her mouth as though to speak. I saw a gleam of relief in her eyes. At last her stupid brain had caught an excuse for having us. If we were a bad bargain, she did not want her world to discover it. After all we were presentable.

A dozen men and one or two women came

up to speak to Lady Flora. Sometimes she introduced one or two shortly, English manners not requiring that she should do so. But I could hear quite audible inquiries concerning us, and Lady Flora's invariable answer that we were "some of those Americans who had lived in Europe for a generation or two, inter-married and all that, ye know. Some connections of old Madame Vestrine's. Millionaires. They have just refused Julien Malpierre."

"Evidently tired of the continentals," one astute gentleman said. "That shows good taste."

Now when a family has rejected a particularly good match, it seems to show that they have a treasure that they are in no hurry about disposing of. Lucile was talked about at once, examined, criticized. She looked like a piece of Dresden china because she was artistically complete, but everybody agreed that there was nothing so tremendously wonderful about her personally, so it must be the fortune that made her so valuable.

A fortune is more valuable any time than a delightful personality, whatever novelists may say. Why do we value the personality of another? Simply and only for the pleasure it

can give us. A great deal of money without any drawbacks can give more pleasure than anything else. Beauty has no place in the running against it. Of course, a monstrosity and a fool are drawbacks which no money can really overcome, but Lucile was neither of these.

Our manner was good, and within a week I was serenely unconscious of Americans. We moved in that charmed set which had hardly been touched by America in those days. We were, according to Lady Flora, people who had lived abroad for a generation or two. I even spoke to one of the great whom I came to know, of my "Godfather" Prolmann, giving him his discarded title; and I did laugh a little when I ventured to tell of the summers I had spent on his yacht. I found one old nobleman very much interested when he heard that Madame Vestrine was with my other children at Lausanne. He had known her as a girl in Vienna when he was a young attaché there.

Actually, within two weeks people were wondering a little why a person of so much importance as I should be about with Lady Flora Hastings. Lady Flora was fashionable, but hardly the friend one would have expected

a woman of my evident character and position to have chosen. It was finally put down to Lucile's youthful taste. But I clung to Lady Flora. Nothing better was in sight. We might have done a great deal for ourselves now had we really had the fortune, but a few pitiful hundreds of pounds a years was all we had for everything.

I had not yet seen Lady Flora's husband, but I knew that he was old, and I gathered from Lady Flora's conversation that he was a man with many interests separate from hers. She spoke of him as being jealous, but that, I already knew, was the purest fiction. One of the most amusing things in my amusing life has been the contemplation of the casual liar. Somebody has said that a liar needs a long memory. More than anything else, a liar needs to be a thorough artist in human nature. The common liar takes a character built on firm lines, and gives to it an attribute or an act which would be as impossible to that particular person as song would be to a crow.

I gathered a fairly correct idea of Mr. Herbert (he had no title) from his wife, and during all our stay in Homburg I was carefully learning the way into his regard. He was old

according to Lady Flora, almost seventy. Whether or not that is age depends upon circumstances.

We did not meet the Great Personage who has made the Homburg of to-day. We were not conspicuous enough for that, although I suppose we are the only Americans above the tourist class who ever went to Homburg who did not come home and give that as one of their experiences.

Homburg is a hot, not very pretty, little place, and there was none of the gay, romantic air which always surrounds a Latin resort. We made some good acquaintances, and before Lucile became in any sense an old story I sent her and Emelie, our old maid, over to Lausanne, and I went to London. There were some things I wanted to arrange.

If there is a more forlorn and lonely place on earth than London in August, I do not know where it can be. The pavements are torn up, the streets small, the people hideous. There is never, never, a time when Paris is not delightful. In the summer in the dullest days, if you are the possessor of but a handful of copper sous, you may take one of the little boats and go up the Seine and be amused all

the way. A little vine-clad balcony at a river restaurant will be like a scene in a theater. A girl in a white frock with a red hat will lean over a table to talk to a young man. The French are artists from the highest to the lowest. If I am ever an outcast, with not a soul to speak to in all the world, I shall go to Paris, and be comparatively happy in the contemplation of joyous, cynical, artistic life. But London is as stodgy as her putty-like bread.

I went to a boarding-house near Kensington Gardens because I wanted to save every penny. I wish I could stop long enough to describe that *ménage*. The landlady deserves a long character study. She was the widow of a fishmonger "in the city," she always said, and she had an imagination that was truly remarkable. She attended auctions, and her house was filled with plunder of the most remarkable description. She declared that this was made up of heirlooms from her uncle, who had died in India and left a great fortune which she had been cheated out of. Her pretences were so transparent that they hurt me. After all she was something like me. I wondered if people could see through me as easily.

There was an old couple who had lived in Canada for some years and thought it the America of to-day, there were too an Armenian, who was devoted to the cause of his people (we heard a good deal of Armenia in those days), and a negro from the French Islands who was studying in London at the expense of his government.

I laughed at myself as I sat by this colored man every day at dinner, and realized that I had no feeling of repulsion for him at all. We conversed quite amiably. And yet even in Fowlersburg I should have left a table in horror at the thought of eating with a negro. Here of course I said nothing about my nationality; I was a simple meek little woman, and I think they believed me a governess out of employment.

One day I put on my most governess-like air and went down to the office of one of the big illustrated weeklies. This was long, long before the day of the exploiting of women through the press, as we now know it in America. In those days it was only royal or criminal women's faces which were common in print. I fancy sometimes that that is one of the things which the world owes to me.

I took with me a large and most beautiful picture of Lucile, which had been made by a young Parisian photographer who has since become famous. It gave her all the charms she lacked and accented those she possessed. I represented to that weekly newspaper editor that I should like to supply him now and then with society notes. I offered my wares very cheap. I had here a photograph of Mademoiselle Lucile, the god-daughter of all of Prolmann's titles, a great heiress, whose father had been an American, and who had recently rejected Comte Julien Malpierre

The editor of the paper almost laughed in my face. It seems that he had a correspondent at Homburg who had casually mentioned the Malpierre story. He said he knew it all. He gave me ten shillings for the photograph.

When I saw the stupendous, amazing story of our wealth and glory which accompanied its publication I was frightened. Lucile was said to have half a million acres in the "fertile tobacco lands of Virginia." She was an "American Princess."

I dreaded a contradiction from Fowlersburg.

But I doubt much if a copy of the English paper ever reached there, and if it had, the inhabitants were of the order of mind that believes what it sees in print even when it is known to be untrue.

## XII

*We Visit Lady Flora Hastings*

The photograph of Lucile made a mild sensation. In launching a young girl advertising of the right sort undeniably is of advantage. Those who cannot get into the newspapers or have better ways of reaching the public they wish to impress argue differently, but I know of what I speak. As a matter of course, for a woman who is a nobody to have her picture labelled "society woman" in the columns of the yellow journals means nothing. It is sometimes a distinct disadvantage to a woman who is hovering on the outer edge of the inner set. And a bad picture, one which shows her in an unattractive fashion, is worse than none at all. But advertising of the right sort pays. After all what is fashion? It exists entirely in the minds of the world. If the world agrees that you are famous or fashionable, you are so, and most decidedly if it ignores you you are not. You can become that intangible thing—fashionable—only by impressing the public in

one way or another. It is surprising to me that the use of personal photographs was so long in coming. It was very lucky for Lucile that it was so, as to-day or even a year or two after my experiment, her picture would have been lost in the crowd of "beauties" that adorned the pages of all the weeklies and the cheap monthlies. Naturally when I saw the picture I was indignant to all my friends, thus calling their attention to it. To the Mal-pierres I was fairly humble, and I begged them to believe that neither Lucile nor I had had the bad taste to mention the affair. It was at Breck Castle that I saw the effect of it. We were regarded with curiosity. There was no quiet slipping-in for us.

Mr. Herbert having married late in life (and a fool) considered all women poor creatures, and he rather enjoyed what he considered the fact. It took them out of the realm of serious things with claims to being considered seriously. He went about his affairs almost as though his wife had no existence. She was indulged in every way, but she knew that if she gave him any cause, his treatment of her would be absolutely free from sentiment. She lived in a sort of nervous terror that some day he might

find a pretext to divorce her, because she had not fulfilled expectations in providing him with an heir. He hated his cousin's son who would succeed him, while believing firmly in primogeniture and the rights of the family name. This fear of a divorce actually seemed at times to drive Lady Flora into doing questionable things. I suppose the great danger she ran fascinated her, just as physical danger sometimes fascinates.

Mr. Herbert and I became friends after a fashion. I am a very conservative, modest, unassuming woman who can take a fairly intelligent interest in almost anything; consequently I always get along with men. There is nothing about me to dislike. I ask nothing of them and I make them comfortable when they are near me.

It was at Breck Castle that we met Lord Horton.

Lord Horton was at this time under a temporary cloud politically and he had leisure to go a-visiting as it were,—something he had had little time to do during the years he was making the reputation which brought him his Victorian title.

He often stayed at great houses during those

years, but I doubt if he had ever gone anywhere in all his life, except for some other purpose than that of enjoying himself. It was not altogether pleasure that brought him to Breck Castle.

There had always been titles and money in the Horton family, but this one, a younger son, had earned his own by way of a political career, beginning as secretary to an austere statesman. Poor Horton! He had had a dull life of it! And the saddest part of it is, he never knew it. He always typifies middle class England to me. It is quite a mistake to imagine that the English people of title are all true aristocracy.

By no means. There have never been many families in Britain who were truly of the *haut*, in spirit or tastes. The present royal family is most distressingly middle class. Queen Alexandra's favorite amusement is copying portraits of her family on teacups—very badly—and taking photographs of her daughters (very bad) with their heads on their husbands' shoulders.

They have a portrait of Horton's mother at Rutherford, done about 1870, when she was in the forties. She wears a headdress and a look

of extreme virtue. I know that they had boiled mutton, brussels sprouts and rice pudding for dinner five times a week, followed by a supper of spiced meats, cheese, whiskey and water. It is easy to tell what they did, so many of Horton's kin are now doing the same thing every day.

I can imagine poor Horton's youth. He is fifty. I know that at Eton he was a serious lad, who pointed out to his fag that obedience was a duty, and would have said his prayers in the face of the whole school. At Oxford he was called a "serious and promising young man," who scorned frivolities. It is a certainty that frivolities never sought him out, for a less amusing person never lived. What a number of people scorn the lives they could never have lived!

The general company at Breck was a gay one. It is only people of position who can afford to be truly gay and let such wit as they have show itself. They are like artists who know their technique thoroughly and can afford to paint in bold dashes I do not know in all the social world anything more pitiable than the poor imitators of society. In England particularly they make a sad and

woeful band, waiting to see what "they" will do.

It settled down into a cold and rainy autumn. Mr. Herbert had once let Breck to an American family and they had fitted it with steam. He declared that he never would have thought of it himself, but that it doubled the value of the property to him.

In these days, sometimes too bad even for shooting, with long evenings in the house, Lucile shone. She was not forward, but she was always good tempered, always prettily dressed, always ready for any amusement, and best of all—always *comme il faut*. How I congratulated myself that I had arranged it that she should reject Julien! There is nothing truer than that the world is inclined to accept us at our own valuation. Lucile felt herself of value, and a princess royal could not have taken homage and consideration more as a matter of course.

I mentioned one day that I had found a trunk among those which had come with us which I supposed in France. It contained Lucile's costume worn in the little play that had been given at Verrière. I took a stupid day, when everybody was yawning and the

men were aimlessly knocking billiard balls about, to tell of the stupidity of my maid in bringing this trunk. As I had anticipated, the news was received with interest. "Yes, the manuscript copy of the play was there also."

In an hour we had the play-book down and were giving out the parts. As I had seen the play at Verrière I was called upon as an authority, and to the amazement of everybody I gave to Lord Horton the part which had been taken at Verrière by Julien. Of course Lucile played the companion part to it.

At first Horton hesitated in accepting it, although I could see that he was tremendously flattered. It had been a pure piece of audacity on my part, but I believed then, and I believe now, that there is not a soul on earth, however stupid and unsocial it may be, who does not in day dreams see itself shining as a social light. Flattery is potent just because we believe ourselves the real standard of excellence. We know that there are people handsomer and cleverer, according to the world's standard, but that standard is movable, and a truly enlightened world would come around to see in us the model. Of course we know we lapse, but we could be everything if we wished, and we

should be, we say to ourselves, if the world were taking notice.

As I had shown no sort of preference for Lord Horton's society, and as I was frank and sincere in all my other assignments, the rest of the party, after a clack of wonder, conceded that I knew my business and tried to see in Horton the characteristics I assured them he possessed, which were revealed in the dialogue and action of the little play. For one thing, it was in French, and that necessarily was a language with which he was entirely conversant.

I concluded that those delicate lover-like speeches which he must make to Lucile would be easier for him to say in French, for I guessed that lover-like speeches were not at home on Horton's tongue, which made me all the more certain that I had found in him one who would make a good husband. The foundation virtues of a good husband do not include gallantry.

After the play Horton followed Lucile about, fascinated as I had felt sure he would be.

Once when I was a little child a traveling preacher visited my grandfather. He was an uneducated man, but with an unusually original

mind. According to his faith he continually tried to convert me. I liked him very much and spoke to him with entire freedom. I told him that I couldn't cry over my sins, which he invited me to do, because I hadn't any. I couldn't think of any sins then but lying and stealing. I couldn't steal, because I never saw anything on the farm which I couldn't have if I wanted it, and why should I lie when my father and mother allowed me to do exactly as I pleased?

The preacher assured me that we were all sinners and told me a story of a child who was in my "state." She was told to pray every night, "Lord, show me that I am a miserable sinner," and in a few short weeks she was "crying at the mercy seat." That story made a profound impression upon me. I carefully refrained from making such a prayer because I had no desire to "cry at the mercy seat," but I thought about it and I reasoned out in my little mind that she told herself she was a sinner until she believed she was one, and in doing so I unconsciously touched a point in mental science on which much is built.

After Horton had rehearsed lines telling Lucile she was a paragon of beauty and virtue

and that he loved her, his mind began to accept it as a fact. He could not do it mechanically as another accustomed to the trick would have done. His mind was not adjusted to the saying of lover-like things which he did not mean.

I was not at all surprised when Horton came to me and told me that he had asked Lucile to marry him and as was natural had been referred to me.

I became agitated at once, and a good deal of it was real. Horton was not only charmed by Lucile's youth and sweetness, but he felt that he was making a brilliant match from a financial point of view.

No need to undeceive him now. If we got him to the shadow of the church he would not face back. He was English. He might sulk a little and even say some plain impolite things, but he would not desert Lucile and make a scandal when he discovered that she was practically penniless.

I asked him if he loved my daughter or if he were taken by the charm of simple girlhood, and then he told me some things which surprised me. He said that Lucile was much more than a simple child. She thought deeply upon serious subjects. I discovered later that

the nuns at the convent in Paris prepare the girls for this sort of emergency. Many of the girls educated at that convent are expected to marry statesmen, and they are given a thin wash of general information, or what looks like information. They have a patter of phrases, which they can use for the amazement of a man.

Horton told me seriously that he expected Lucile to be a "helpmeet" to him, and that he had dared ask her to marry him because her mind was so mature.

Considering all things, Horton was a much better husband for Lucile than Julien would have ever been. But when was a "better" thing too attractive? Lucile, now that girlhood is gone, is a cold practical woman. I am always wondering what she might have been, and all my life I shall miss Julien Malpierre and my vision of French history. Yet Horton is a faithful and I believe an admiring husband.

## XIII

*The Settling of Lucile*

We Americans acquire some curious ideas of England from books. Among others, is a belief that in winter London is practically deserted by everything that could be called society. "The season" in early summer was supposed by me to constitute the only time when anybody above the middle class was seen in London. Really nowadays those of the aristocracy who can afford it keep their town house open the greater part of the year.

Now that Lucile was engaged my first impulse was to go back to Paris for the winter, let her marry there, and save the expense of a London establishment. But this plan had disadvantages. In the first place, the Malpierrres were the best people I knew in Paris, and they could hardly be expected to take a great interest in Lucile's marriage. I even doubted if they would come in from the country for it. I could not drive Lady Flora to the point of rebellion by insisting that she should give Lucile

her wedding. There was nothing for it but to take a furnished house in Mayfair by dipping into my reserve fund. I considered this from every side and then took a good house while I was about it. Genevieve was now ready for the world. With her sister well married she would of course have a tremendous advantage and would stay with her a great deal of the time. If necessary, I would even go into debt a little to get my second daughter settled. I looked at the jewels Prolmann had given me. At the worst I could do something with them. If I could marry Genevieve well and quickly, the two girls could take care of Jane.

In watching families I have noticed that the first marriage usually settles the status of a family of girls. If the first marries badly or rests a long time in the family nest, it has a bad effect upon the prospects of the rest. Men are apt to wonder if there is something wrong that has warned off other men. They grow suspicious. And whatever we women say, men believe that an unmarried woman has lacked opportunities, and justly so generally.

If it can be avoided it is not well to show two marriageable daughters at the same time.

Two hot-house peaches are not so rare as one hot-house peach. I know that to say this is in very bad taste. The romantic and those who take what they call a "serious" view of marriage will call it a vulgar and deplorable statement. Oh, I know the patter of the romantic and the "serious."

Many, many times have I said, and saying, believed, the most beautiful and conventional things concerning the relations of men and women. But here I am allowing myself the privilege of telling the truth. I have discovered that a man's nature changes not at all in acquiring a wife—unless, perchance, he has a very undisciplined nature. In that case he will make a very bad husband.

I considered myself a model of diplomacy when I was able to secure Lili de Malpierre as one of Lucile's bridesmaids. Lili's mother was a clever woman—in some ways. She believed the story of our fortune, and believing saw in Genevieve a more desirable heiress than Lucile, for Lucile had not an elder sister who was the wife of an English Lord. Then too the Marquise was progressive. France is a republic, and say what you will, a title in a republic has not the same value as in a mon-

archy. Who could say what advantage Lili might not derive from visits to England? The Marquise could trust me to ward off the ineligible. Added to this were the facts of the independent nature of Lili which makes her to-day one of the most conspicuous women in France, her fondness for Genevieve, and her determination to come.

Lucile's wedding was a fairly brilliant one. The bad half-hour with Horton was over. I actually made him see Lucile as a rich girl to the end, and we went as formally about settling part of those wild West Virginia lands upon her and her children as though they had been located in Kent and Surrey. Lucile has two nice little boys, and I am fond of them, but they do not laugh up into my eyes as Julien Malpierre's children would have laughed. Had I only known, had I only dreamed of the future, I might have managed some way. I comfort myself with the reflection that it would not have been best for Lucile. She is the proper wife for Horton. She likes her life, but—I want my darling little French grandchildren playing about the yellow and green old marbles at Verrière.

It was at the time of Lucile's wedding that I

first came into contact with the Kensington Palace crowd, and some others.

Kensington Palace and Hampton Court are a sort of royal alms houses, places to keep poor relations and the widows and orphans of those who have a claim of some sort upon the royal family. The late Queen was born at Kensington when her parents were very poor relations, and so I believe was the present Princess of Wales. At any rate, the family of the Princess May lived there and it was there that the famous auction took place which scattered so many of the royal heirlooms. A red flag was hung out of the palace window and the Tecks were "sold up" that tradesmen might be paid. And I suppose the sons and daughters of these same tradesmen tremble and shed tears when they see "royalty," like the rest of their kind, and see nothing humorous in the situation.

I have a work-table, once the property of Queen Adelaide, which came from that sale.

There are some frumpy old ladies living in Kensington Palace who are not above taking in "paying guests." These are often Americans, who pay handsomely for the introductions that come their way through their hostesses.

As Lord Horton was not to be ignored as a political factor and as his family itself was entitled to recognition, we of course had a sprig of royalty at the wedding. But Horton had besides a second cousin who lived in Kensington Palace, so we were thoroughly advertised in that abode of court gossip.

A bishop's widow, resident there at that time, had a California girl as her guest, and she arranged with Horton's cousin that her American should receive an invitation to Lucile's wedding.

I should have had a fellow feeling for that American girl, and have done what I could to give her a lift. Up to that time the only introductions she had achieved were to the Princess Christian and Miss Marie Corelli. But I had long ago made up my mind that I could not stand one grain of handicap. Good-nature, a fellow feeling, kindness of any sort were expensive luxuries which it was impossible for me to afford. And—I rather enjoyed snubbing that girl. My mind ran ahead. I saw the possibility of her name being cabled to America as one of the Americans at the wedding, and I knew she was a nobody or she would not be where she was. I declined to give any reason

for refusing the invitation, but I refused it, even in the face of a demand for it from Horton's mother.

"Poor Lucia (the cousin) had promised this invitation," Horton's mother said. "Poor Mrs. Beamish (the bishop's widow) must *live*, and if she cannot secure good invitations for her guest she will leave her. As it is, they have had no desserts but milk puddings for two years. Of course you rich Americans do not understand poverty."

But I smiled and declined to be moved even by milk puddings. I wondered what Horton's mother would have thought could she have known that "dessert" was almost unknown to my youth.

So Lady Caulfield (Horton is a younger son of Baron Caulfield), unable to realize that I could refuse her anything except for some very good reason, took the usual Victorian idea that the girl's character was not good, and proceeded to drop a word at Kensington Palace which sent her home ruined so far as England was concerned.

But there were some Americans at the wedding. They were New Yorkers with whose family history I am sure I was just a

trifle better acquainted than they were. They belonged to the rich new set which was just at that time coming into some vogue. In that day the old Knickerbocker families still considered that they led New York society. What a little while ago that was! I confess that I was green enough then to ignore the certain rise into prominence of the tremendously wealthy. Had I been able to do so, or had it been demanded of me, I should very readily have put myself on the side of the old families. Fortunately I had not to choose. I realized that to know Americans at all, I must be introduced somehow. It was very easy, going about London as the mother of Lord Horton's fiancée, to make what acquaintances I chose there. Everybody by this time accepted us as enormously rich people who had lived abroad for generations; Lady Hastings had arranged that. Lucile and I had week's ends at the best country houses, and many dinners and evening parties in London.

It was in the midst of all these festivities that I heard of my father's death. Poor father! A pang struck my heart as I thought of his loneliness. I had not even written often. There was so little to say to him. After

mother died he had lived on the farm all alone, even doing his own cooking. He had not a relative in the world that he knew, and he and mother's family were not friends. The lawyers who had charge of my property wrote after the funeral—sending the letter to the bankers.

For a little while the vision of good-tempered, indulgent "pappy" sent me into hysterical sobs. They had found him one day where he had fallen by the stove, with some cornmeal mush in a pan beside him. He had been dead a day.

For a little while I was unreasonable. It seemed my fault. I was sure that the gossip of Fowlersburg would say that it was my fault! But when I saw that he had left me almost fifty thousand dollars in this farm and in money, I knew that he would simply be called eccentric.

The question now was what I was to do about the wedding. It seemed best to let it go on. Later I could say that father had known of it, had spoken of his illness, and begged that nothing should stop it. I was sick with remorse, I knew that I should have gone to him—had I known. It hurt me with a real physical pain. If I had had only myself to

think of how differently I should have behaved.

Madame Vestrine and the children did not come over until the last minute.

Lucile's wedding dress was made with a simple long satin train covered by a magnificent web of a lace veil as its chief feature. That veil was hired from a French house, and it figured in the descriptions as an heirloom. I believe that Lucile thought that it was an heirloom. She asked me where I had kept it all these years. I told her that her grandfather had sent it to me with her grandmother's portrait, and I gave her the idea that it had belonged to her grandmother. Why not? If I could not produce it again it could easily be stolen—as the annals of the family ran on.

The wedding was beautiful. It was December, just a little before Christmas, but the air was crisp and the sun bright, for London. "St. George's, Hanover Square!" How many, many times had I read those words in my English novels in the old days! How many times had I thrilled at the thought of being the heroine who was married there! And here was my daughter being married in St. George's, Hanover Square, to an English Lord!

Who shall say that we do not create conditions by thinking and dreaming of them? Certain it is, and I defy any to deny it, that had I never seen a copy of the old *New York Ledger* away back in the beginning, and followed it up by Harper's cheap editions and "Seasides," my daughter would never have stood at the altar in St. George's and promised to love, honor and obey a Lord.

I wonder what conventional mothers think about when their daughters marry. I wish I could have another life in which to feel the reality of conventional living, conventional thinking. As it is, I have never had anything but the shadow. Behind the active *me* is always the woman who must plan and move the springs by which I move. I can no more "let myself go" than an actress on the stage can be natural. To be natural is not art in her case, nor in mine. It would bring the play to an end.

I am always letting my imagination tell me how the woman that I seem to be would feel under certain circumstances, and then I try to act as though I felt like that.

At Lucile's wedding I was not tearful, but I was very serious—and a little wistful. Mr.

Herbert gave the bride away. The papers all announced that "until the last moment" it had been expected that Prolmann (by his titles) would perform that office, but illness had prevented. As a matter of fact I wrote to Prolmann and told him that Lucile had asked that he would come. But he declined, and sent the pearl necklace.

I thought once of having the American Minister. The Minister at that time was a man whose father had been a great American, but he had had no training in social usages. Everybody used him for any purpose, and it would have been no trouble at all to secure him as an assistant at Lucile's wedding. But I wisely decided that he could be no advantage—like most things easily acquired.

As I saw Lucile come down from the altar on her husband's arm, I had a touch of what we call sentiment. Had it been possible I should have put my head down and cried like a child. But I knew better. I was acting the better bred mother. And all through the after ceremonies, the breakfast and the going away, I was thinking, thinking, "Will Lucile begin right?"

How thankful I was that the child had noth-

ing to reveal, for she knew nothing. She could be natural, I said to myself. And then—I wondered. Had she forgotten Julien, or did his big figure and sweet heavy voice seem alive about her? After all she was a woman now and must take up and bear a woman's burden—which must always be borne in silence and secrecy—if she is a successful woman.

## XIV

*My Second Daughter*

It was after Lucile had gone away to Italy with her husband that I was invited to take Genevieve and Lili to a week's end in the country to meet the then Prince of Wales and his wife and daughters. We were asked at the very last minute and I never knew exactly why.

The Prince was in the habit of naming the guests he wished to meet, and it was in those days his one sincere hope that he might find somebody who would amuse him. Now I was not, am not, and never shall be amusing. I never said a witty or a clever thing in my life. I am not beautiful, nor particularly well dressed. I confess that I did not want to go to that house party. We could not afford to keep up in any way with the people who made the so-called "Prince of Wales Set," nor I confess did I court the position of belonging to it.

There has been now and then a strange idea in America that there exists an English set

that did not care to be friends with the King when he was Prince of Wales. There never was an Englishman nor an Englishwoman who did not always remember that here was the country's future king, of necessity the very head of English society.

The strange idea came in some manner from the Duke of Richmond's action in once declining to entertain the Royal party at Goodwood. I am in no position to know the facts of that affair nor is any one else who is at all likely to tell them; but the family history of the Duke of Richmond does not make it likely that he would slight a king. Nor has he ever done so, the English people are very sure.

I was nervous over this visit, and I took myself to task because of it. What was the use of all my work, my ambition, my contriving, if I could not meet the realization of my hopes, fill the rôle to which I aspired? I always look with contempt upon the women and men who "do not care for society." They are advertising themselves as poor things, lacking in some vital nerve, some sense of equality with their kind, for we never shun the places where we are comfortable and our vanity is soothed. Nature is inexorable, and an understanding of

her methods is philosophy. The man who falls out of the race for any reason is simply making way for one stronger than he, one more to nature's mind, and is illustrating the rule of the survival of the fittest.

The recluse does not realize that he is simply a discarded building-stone in the structure of civilization, who puts himself out of the way, not by free will, but according to a law, because his weaknesses make him useless.

I discovered that the visiting with Royalty was very simple. The Royalties often did not appear until noon and some days not then. It was at dinner and in the evening that the other guests most often saw them, and each evening only a few of us were brought into actual contact with them.

They were very simple and unostentatious, and the Princesses seemed almost anxious to please, which is natural, as royalty exists in England by sufferance. The then Princess of Wales reminded me, in her evening dress, of a mechanical doll. She has a high, affected, musical voice, a stiff figure, a painted face, and a very well made, light-brown wig. She sat on a sofa in the center of one of the drawing-rooms, and said pleasant things. Her large

and truly beautiful eyes give the only expression to a face from which every line has been eliminated by stretching the skin. A frown is a physical impossibility to her, which sounds like the story of a gift to a princess from a fairy godmother instead a "plastic surgeon." Royalty comes too near to us in these days. Who knows? that long-ago princess who couldn't laugh, and inspired so many romantic folk-tales of poor young adventurers who broke the curse and ascended the throne, may have had a simple paralysis of the facial muscles!

They have some pathetic reserves, these poor figureheads. One day our hostess brought out an album to show the Princess of Wales. It was silver bound and carefully locked. It contained "private photographs" of the royal family. In other days, when his sovereign wished to compliment a subject, he sent for the best painter in the country and ordered a portrait for his friend. The walls of this very house held portraits of sovereigns from Queen Elizabeth down to the end of the Stuart line. In those days a good portrait cost about ten pounds. Nowadays, except in rare instances, the best Victoria's family can do is to offer a "private photograph," one which the

public has not been allowed to see. The young princesses were tremendously amused by this collection and spent a whole evening over it; but the Princess of Wales, to the visible annoyance of her hostess, slipped out two or three of her own old photographs. "You will give me these, will you not?" she said sweetly. "I have no duplicates." I did not see them, but I heard two women laughing a little later; "They had looped-up skirts and showed her feet. She has destroyed almost all of them. They *are* awful."

"The Princess should have busts made of herself, like those of the ancient Roman ladies," Colonel Cameron said to them. "They had a sort of marble wig that could be changed with the fashions."

"A very good idea, but you made it up in this instant," one of the women said.

"I did not. I saw them in the British Museum."

"I have never been there," one of the women said smartly, "I never have occasion for clandestine interviews. I shall keep a watch on any friend of mine who knows about those Roman ladies."

This Colonel Cameron was a close friend of

the Prince, and a man whose vicinity I found vaguely unpleasant.

We were presented to the Prince the first evening. He said some polite things to us and graciously remembered Lili's parents. I think he was disappointed in me. I was so commonplace. He had looked at me with some curiosity, and said rather bluntly that he was surprised to see Horton's mother-in-law so young. He asked me a question or two about Prolmann, showing that he had heard our so-called history. Prolmann had entertained him once on his Hungarian estate long years before.

The Prince found the girls more amusing, although generally girls bore him after he has given them a little of that patronizing advice which, like all men of his type, he prefacing with "My dear." The Prince at this time had the boldest eyes I ever saw. He is a short, stout man, with a thick German tongue in speaking, and it must be confessed in eating also. Genevieve made me nervous. Had Genevieve been brought up differently, she would have made a most attractive milliners' saleswoman. I never deceive myself, and she always reminds me of a superior sort of shop

girl. She has the same haughty manner, style in dress and undercurrent of blague. Her waist (that was before the day of "straight fronts") was seventeen inches around, and her shoulders were forty. Naturally, her dress was as simple as white muslin could be made, and her slippers were even bowless, but she looked like a fashion-plate, or an illustration by "Mars."

Before I had been in that house twenty-four hours I knew that between her and Lili I should have my hands full.

I have no idea what they talked about to the men who found their society so absorbing; I only know that the subject was obviously changed whenever I came within hearing distance. It was Colonel Cameron who frightened me. He was the middle-aged heir to a Dukedom, a man who had married an heiress when he was barely twenty-one, and had since used his opportunities. He followed Genevieve about from morning until night, but in such a way that I could formulate no objections, even to Genevieve. This was not the society, nor were mine the methods which said, "Beware of a married man." If Genevieve could not be trusted to think of a man except

as a possible husband, it were better to send her back to West Virginia, where they are still in that era.

But I was afraid. I did not want my peach handled, although this one had not the reticence and bloom of innocence which had made Lucile's charm. As for Lili, she was past my control altogether. She smoked cigarettes openly at tea time, and discussed Anatole France's latest novel with the old Duchess of Lawrence. She ridiculed his knowledge of real French society, calmly contradicting the Duchess when her argument demanded.

"I have not visited in France for twenty years," the Duchess said. "I remember your grandfather. A charming man."

"Society has changed since then," Lili said, putting one slender arm behind her head and lolling in the deep velvet chair she had chosen. One might have imagined from her assurance that she had known all about the life of that day, instead of being unborn. "Even in the old nobility there is a respect for money, which we have learned from you money-mad English. Papa married for money, you know, and I cannot say I am sorry. It saves me the annoyance of doing so."

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"And you, I suppose, you young girl of the convent, will marry for love?" the Duchess asked with some sarcasm.

"I shall not marry at all," Lili said nonchalantly.

Now these new ideas might do for Lili, but I could not afford them for Genevieve, and as soon as we were again in London, I arranged for Lili's return to her mother. She and Genevieve arranged, I vaguely understood, finally to have an establishment in Paris where they were to live together in the utmost freedom, entertaining what they called "interesting people," who were, so far as I made out, anybody who had been talked about. Poor young fools! They were grievously disappointed that the Prince was only a fat, bold-eyed, oldish man. I think he had stood high on their list before that visit.

There was nothing subtle about Genevieve. All her goods were in the window. She mortified me. Much prettier and showier than Lucile, I could make no effects with her. She would never attract a conservative Englishman like Horton. I had cherished some hope that the rather fast stupid young eldest son of some noble family might be taken by her as he

might have been taken—as so many of them are—by a music hall singer or an actress. And I found that they were attracted at first by that curious atmosphere of sex which women like Genevieve throw about them, but they were stupid in her eyes, and she would have none of them. She wanted the hero of a French novel, and the nearest approach to it that she had seen was Colonel Cameron. His face was pale, his eyes brilliant, and his upcurled and pointed mustache showed large sound teeth.

His wife and the Duchess of Lawrence left cards when we were all returned to town. The Duchess of Lawrence had spent the early years of her married life going about from one court to another, while her husband went in the other direction. And then, tired out, they had come home in middle age to discover, seemingly to their surprise, that their youth was gone and there was no heir except the son of a cousin.

"All of us are prone to overlook some detail," the Duke is said to have remarked to a friend. "And, come to think of it, I believe I'd as soon an enemy inherited my debts."

Cameron had married an heiress who wanted

to be a Duchess. He awaited the title with equanimity, going his devious ways, very sure that so long as he was a prospective duke his wife would never divorce him.

A month later, a little after the New Year, I went to Genevieve's bed-room after she was supposed to have gone to bed. It was not a habit of mine, but that evening we had been rather dull at home and had retired early. I remembered something I wanted to say to her concerning our plans for the next day.

Jane and Robert had gone back to school. I would have kept Jane in London, but the rates which I paid at Paris in the beginning still held, and necessarily I could get nothing as advantageous in England.

Robert was a manly boy now, not too tall, but broad and square, with a clean, frank, well-bred face. He had naturally courteous manners. Madame Vestrine was in love with the boy, and decided to spend the winter in Switzerland to be near him.

Genevieve and I were alone in the London house.

When I opened Genevieve's door I saw that she was not there. The bed was untouched, and a wrap or two was thrown hastily aside as

though she had tried two or three before she had found one to her mind.

I had met with some difficulty in opening the door, as it was locked. It was only after I had knocked and called and felt my heart stand still at no response that I remembered the housekeeper's keys (I was the housekeeper here now) and opened the door with one from that bunch.

Genevieve had very plainly gone out. Nobody will ever know what I felt then. I have no ability to express the feeling that went over me. I hardly expected her to return, and except for the wreck and ruin it would have been for all of us, I would have wished that she might never come back. Could I have wished her dead and buried, how gladly I would have done so. How I despised her, and how I pitied her! I remembered her as a little chubby red and white baby whose gay laugh and romping ways made her her father's darling. How little she knew! what a fool she was!

I knew that she had gone out with Cameron. A sudden thought sent me to the box where we kept the latch key. It was gone. Then she intended to come back.

I detest scenes, and I do not know how to manage them. I went into my own room, put the door ajar and waited for my child to come home.

She came in, stealing up the stairs in the dark, and slipped into the corridor which led to her own apartments. The door of her bedroom was locked as she had left it. I heard it close and then I went to bed.

The next morning I engaged passage from Liverpool for the following week. I told Genevieve that I was going to put Robert in an American college next year, and thought it well to have him prepare for his entrance the next autumn. He came hastily from Switzerland, and we started for New York.

## XV

*We Return to America*

I came up New York bay with mixed emotions. If I had made my way in England and France, I kept reminding myself, I should have no difficulty in conquering here. But underneath the bravado by which I endeavored to keep up my own spirit was an undercurrent of doubt. Here Prolmann could only be a serious disadvantage; here I was practically stripped of my wonderful estates in Virginia, but here, I said to myself, I was Lady Horton's mother. The Americans I had met in London had let me see that that was fairly potent, at least over there. But what would it do for me here? I knew that there were people who had been graciously received even by Victoria who were not received in the New York set for which I was ambitious. I could not imagine, either, that the mother of the Duchesse de B—— was received in New York. And I had almost no money.

We went at once to a small hotel on Union

Square, which we had heard of as the stopping-place of some English people. And even there we could not afford to stay long. We must get something "quieter" which would yet have the appearance of choice instead of necessity.

It was a terrible March day when we landed. The dirt in the unclean streets was blowing in clouds. The sharp clear air was as unbecoming as the light from a hospital window. I looked at my children, and my boy seemed raw and commonplace and my girl entirely vulgar.

It was one of the few times in my life when I lost heart, when the struggle seemed impossible. All my plans turned tawdry and transparent. How I wanted help! How I wanted to turn to my children and say, "Help me! I am doing everything I can for you. We must work together to keep up appearances, to be able to go along at all." But my common sense told me the absurd folly of that. If either of them had known that keeping up appearances was what we were doing they would have lost the ability to do it.

They did know, of course, that our income was limited and that they could not spend much money, but their training had taught

them that it was no disgrace, simply a temporary inconvenience in their case, not to be spoken of purely for financial reasons.

I had come to America before I desired to, absolutely forced here by Genevieve. Later we might have come as guests on somebody's yacht and made our first appearance at Newport. I thought of all these things. I wished that I had put Genevieve back into the convent while I brought Robert over. I wished that I had done everything but what I had done. Dozens of times I have dreamed of finding myself at entertainments in my night clothes. Well, that March morning in New York I had exactly the same feeling. How I wished I had stayed in Europe!

Robert was polite and Genevieve was sullen. She sneered at the hotel, she sneered at the profusion of American food. She listened with contemptuous ears to the American voices in the hotel dining-room, and viewed with disdainful eyes the garments upon the speakers. I must confess that the voices distressed me. For the first time I understood what foreigners mean by our nasal voices.

We walked up Fifth Avenue the second day, the dirt whirling into our faces, and then we

crossed over into famous Broadway. I wonder if there is anybody else who remembers the Fifth Avenue and Broadway of only a few years ago? To us, aliens, without a tie in America, setting our feet for the first time in New York, it seemed on the surface ridiculous to have come. And had I lived only from day to day, taking what came to me, had I been the woman I was when I went to Europe, I should have turned and left it, so little did it seem worth while. And yet I knew that this was America, and we were Americans. Never could our position be sound before the world until *this* was conquered. A nobody in his own land is a nobody in all the world. And my boy must make his own life. If he were to marry a rich wife and achieve riches in that way, which I confess was the best I hoped for, it must be an American wife. No rich woman of any position in any other country would consider him for an instant. But to do that he must have some place in the world, something to stand upon. I had given his career a good deal of thought. The church and medicine were the only professions which I thought possible for him. I laughed at my own thoughts sometimes as I lay in my bed at

night. I imagined myself as the tactful mother of a parish, hunting through old books for sermons to rewrite. Robert could have written an average sermon, neat and didactic, but that never would have satisfied me. Still I feared I should have trouble to induce him to let me lead him into the church. I was sure as I looked into his handsome sunny face, unaggressive, agreeable, a little slow, much like my mother's, that he would make a successful physician. He would bolster up his patients' spirits, employ a good nurse, and let nature alone. But he shrugged his shoulders over its disagreeable features, and sweetly asked to be given other work to do.

"My son," I asked, "what do you want to do?"

He laughed easily and bowed in a little foreign fashion that he had learned from Prolmann.

"My dear mamma," he said in French, "I would be a duke."

"But, alas," I returned, "I am not a fairy godmother."

To my amazement his frank eyes took on a suddenly shrewd expression. He looked at me with almost a beam of real intelligence, of

understanding. "That is not so sure," he said.

For an instant fright possessed me. Was it possible that he knew, could see, could understand all I had done? Had that beam rested in his eyes an instant longer, perhaps I should have broken down the wall between us. But a second later it had disappeared and I could not convince myself that it had ever been there.

"You have always indulged us in our desires," he said in a commonplace polite manner.

I took him over to Boston and put him under a tutor to prepare for Harvard the next year. I found that he could enter as a sophomore, and that he was unusually well grounded, particularly in languages. I left him then, having given no sign that he was preparing to be anything but a duke.

## XVI

*We Look About Us.*

New York had no literature, as England and France have, to teach me the habits and ways of the people with whom I wished to associate. Of course New York supposed itself then, and supposes itself now, to be exactly like London. But this is not altogether true. There has never been a novelist who has thoroughly pictured American society, so that you may use the record for a guide-book to find your way about.

There are one or two women who belong to what is known as society who write, but they color their narratives with personal feeling. Most of the stories of society are written by young men and women whose imagination is whetted by the sight of carriages on Fifth Avenue and the possession of an admission ticket to the horse show. Sometimes they secure an opportunity to see the inside of a millionaire's house, for most of them are reporters on the papers. As smart society is fundamentally

like any other, human nature being exactly the same everywhere, they cannot make tremendous mistakes except in detail. People eat, sleep, quarrel, make up, lie and cry, whether they are Esquimaux or Americans, and they are moved by ambition, envy, spite, avarice or passion on Central Park East and Henry Street.

But few of these stories had been written then. Mrs. Burton Harrison and Mr. Edgar Fawcett were about all I had. I have often wondered if Mrs. Harrison ever suspected that the great vogue of her "Anglomaniacs" was due to the desire on the part of outsiders to know about the "real thing." Mr. Clyde Fitch, even, had not risen to show that the "smart set" is made of paper. I believe the out-of-town people who make up the greater part of our theater audiences believe Mr. Fitch to know all about the people he depicts. He probably does, but they are not New York's society people at all. Nor is Mr. Richard Harding Davis in a position to tell us how to behave in the houses of smartness. As with the rest of them, the jargon of the class that seems—only seems—to be living simply for amusement is not my mother tongue; but I have gone a little below the skin of "society"

in New York. I have a son-in-law, whom I know well, who was born in that class. I have a daughter-in-law who is an amiable, rather domestic woman, who has known no other class and who has never discovered that her husband is a parvenu. And I have learned the rules with the care with which one studies a foreign language.

Yellow journals to the contrary, the "society" class of New York is not made up of butterflies entirely. The flower garden of pleasure attracts butterflies, but they only live a few days at the best, and they never truly play the game. No, it isn't all amusement. It is the eternal struggle to have the best.

Philosophers, men who sit in college libraries, novelists who were brought up on Ohio farms, descendants of Puritan families that failed to take and keep the lead in the colony, the editorial writer who wants to sell the workingman his penny paper, and the sheep who follow the last speaker, may cry out at the thought of the society man or woman having or seeking for the best. When you ask those teachers what the best is, they give you answers according to their minds. But what are they all struggling for? To be free to go where they

please, to see what the world has to offer, and to reach out their hands and take what they want of it. They all agree that that is what they want. (Maeterlinck has shown us how low our ideals are, how selfish, compared even with the bees, but it does not make us less selfish to deny the fact.) Who gets that opportunity except the people who make and keep money, the people whose manners are polished until they do not offend, who have a free masonry of fair play in social intercourse? Whatever lies are told, those are the necessities of a permanent social position.

Some of the "sociologists" will indignantly deny that this is what they want. They say that they want to "uplift mankind." To what do they want to lift him? To what does he want to be lifted? I will tell you, because he can only feel. To be free to go where he pleases, to see what the world has to offer and to reach out his hand and take what he wants of it. The clever ones learn that it can come only through wealth and civilization, through society. How many heads of the families who make the real "smart set" in New York are not superior men?

Suppose they do play. How many of the

great middle class would love to break the stupid monotony of their lives by playing if they only knew how! Did you ever see a man or woman, who was not a fool, who did not respond to gaiety? If you think the "smart set" is all play you are much mistaken, and show that you have only seen it from the outside.

It, too, has its fools, its wickedness, its absurdities, being purely human.

It was with one of its women, a woman born in it, whose nature was sweet but inclined to folly, that my lot was cast for a little.

I spent some time looking for an apartment. A hotel was too expensive. And of course a boarding-house, where we should be obliged to meet all sorts of curiosities and become known to them, was quite out of the question.

I finally discovered an apartment house which had all of my requirements. It was in a quiet street, was owned by a woman who had imbibed some of the "art ideas" which had been gradually making their way in America since the "Centennial Year," and had converted her old home into apartments. She had succeeded in turning out something which to the American idea was "French," although I

never saw anything in France like it. The old-fashioned brownstone steps had been taken away and a portico built over the basement door, which became the *rez-de-chaussée*. The strip in front was asphalted, and a high iron fence separated it from the street. Balconies and latticed bow windows were thrown out at the front and back of the house and the walls of the rooms wainscoted. Open fire-places with brass fittings and high colonial mantle-pieces were put in as a compensation for dark middle rooms and tin bath-tubs.

I was fortunate in securing a furnished apartment here, which we made tasteful by the draperies and knick-knacks we had brought with us. We paid one hundred and thirty dollars a month for it.

I was actually so ignorant of New York ways that I did not know how foolish I was to rent a furnished apartment in April. To my mind New York was in the north and consequently cool, and I did not realize that the whole world of people whom I wished to know was already away or going. I discovered this after I had settled and sent my cards to the Americans I knew. Not one of them was in town.

There was not so much to amuse one in New

York as there is now. There were not so many theaters and those that were open were not lively. When I look back upon the audiences of those days it is with a smile. Every woman wore a hat, and she was not far from the black silk era. One of the pretty evening frocks which are so common in our audiences now would have created a sensation and usurped the attention usually given to the stage.

We found it terribly dull, and Genevieve was at no pains to conceal her disgust. I think that I was in danger of losing all hold of her at this time. She would have been quite capable of finding the money in some fashion and buying a ticket back to England had a diversion not arrived.

I came home one day, warm, tired, fancying that my judgment was a thing of the past; it had seemed to desert me lately. I wondered if I could touch Genevieve's heart by letting her see that I loved her. It seemed to me that here was the place for me to "show my heart." In a novel she would have found me some day with "a look in my eyes" which would have "broken down reserves" between us. We should have been mother and child. Her heart would have softened to me.

Those are the climaxes of imaginary stories. The magazines teem with them. I wonder if the people who write them ever knew people like that. I used sometimes to think that I might do that if it ever seemed expedient—until I saw Genevieve again. It was in me to pretend to be sentimental, but I realized when I faced her that never for an instant was it in Genevieve.

I came home this afternoon and wearily climbed the narrow gas-lighted stairs that led to our apartment. The art burlap on the wall and the thoroughly original treatment of the niche on the turn of the stairs which marks every old New York house, did not compensate me for an elevator this day. I was physically and mentally tired—and realized that we had spent too much money. We had spent so much that it was going to be impossible for us to go away properly for the summer without danger to our capital. What a bad manager I had shown myself! All at once a thought struck me. Had I passed the climax of my powers? With chills running over my shoulders and tingling along the backs of my hands, I remembered my kinfolk. My mother was an old woman at thirty-five. All ill-bred things

grow old early. It is a law. It is the sure mark of inferiority. And as we grow old we return to our race—to its characteristics.

Was I going to become one of those silent, wizened women, going through the tread-mill of existence, never thinking, marching to the end of life in a tired indifference? My aunts, my mother's sisters, and my cousins passed before me. I felt for that moment as Dryope must have felt when she knew herself turning into a tree, the bark growing stiff about her; only instead of weeping I wanted to shriek a protest, to push the enlacing bark aside. With an effort of will I ceased to plod wearily up the stairs and went up like a girl, bounding into the "hall" of our apartment (which was a converted hall bed-room).

I had put on a pretty little pearl gown that morning and a toque of violets, and as it was the day of dowdy street dressing in New York, had felt myself ridiculous in my simple Paris frock as I saw the looks of the fat women I passed. But I met a different glance now.

As I entered two young men arose. They had been sitting together on a couch facing Genevieve, the lattices of the bay-window behind them. One of them was so magnifi-

cent that he left the other colorless and insignificant.

When I think of the good-looking men I have known in my life, my mind always goes back to Chester Ward as not only the handsomest man but the most absolutely beautiful human being I ever saw. His mother told me once that she had heard the old tale of *Æsop's* wife and had marked her child with beauty, and she showed me the engraving which she had kept ever facing her eyes before Chester's birth. It was a banal portrait of Wilkes Booth! But surely the gods themselves had waited on the marking of Chester. He had the form of Apollo and the ox eyes of Juno.

I knew him at once, although when I had last seen him he was a lank, curly-haired boy, bringing in wood and water for his mother, who had lived next door to us in Fowlersburg. In my surprise at seeing him and asking how he had found us I almost forgot the small square clever-eyed young man who waited politely by his side.

He was presently introduced to me as Mr. Babcock, a college friend of Chester's whom he had met in New York only that day. Chester, he told me, was living in Washington,

where he was practicing law. He was over in New York for a week and had taken the occasion to call upon us, as he had heard from Fowlersburg that we were living here. Chester talked staccato in a charming voice:

"I suppose you will be going down soon. They are going to put a railroad through your place, they tell me. Property is advancing in price around Fowlersburg. You will be selling your farm for town lots in a few years. Mother talks about you all the time. She told me, if I saw you, to be sure and tell you to come down and spend the whole summer with her, and you could talk over old times."

Of course I said that I would never sell the old place, town lots or no town lots. The town has never grown out in this direction, so I have kept that promise, but the prospect of it at that moment put new life into me.

Babcock, whose eyes were fastened on Genevieve, let us talk on, but I could see my daughter casting backward glances toward the wonderful young man whose magnetic presence and caressing voice seemed to fill the whole room.

Through all the Fowlersburg gossip, the story of how this or that girl had married, of

how the tale of Lucile's marriage had fairly awakened the town, my mind was working. Was this beautiful creature available as a husband for Genevieve? I knew that his family was among the best in the state. They were not rich, but if he were a lawyer in Washington he might make money. He bore every sign of prosperity, and not one of struggle. And then—the young man with him, I knew by his name to belong to a famous New York family.

I turned to Mr. Babcock presently and told him that I thought that I had met his cousin, Mrs. Dodds, in London.

I had hesitated over this at first. I was making a complete chain by which all my pretensions could be exposed to New York. If Chester wished, he could tell the story of our pretensions to this young man. But something very tangible told me that Chester would do nothing of the sort.

I, Lady Horton's mother, was very useful to him. It is one thing to belong to an old West Virginia family, and another to reach New York society. And in Chester's eyes we had always been unusual people. He had seen the wicker chairs and chintz roses, those wonders

of his day. From the way he accented the old friendship for his mother, and led the talk to France and England, I could see that he had brought Babcock to us that we might impress him; and so ungrateful was I, that—that one thing decided me that Chester would not do. He did not ring sound.

It was luncheon time presently, and we insisted that the young men should stay for a "woman's luncheon."

"Old-fashioned West Virginia manner," I said to Babcock, and we all took the remark seriously.

We had the French servant I had brought with me, and I knew that the soup pot was full, as always, and that a salad, a bottle of wine and informality would go a great way with young men.

They, in their turn, asked us to go out to dinner with them at Delmonico's that evening.

As we went down the stairs in the evening's dusk, we passed our upstairs neighbor, who had already begun to excite my curiosity. She looked at Chester with frank admiration, but she nodded with a smile which lowered her eyelids and drew up one side of her mouth

whimsically when she saw Babcock. He greeted her with formality.

Chester walked along for a moment in silence.

"Wasn't that Mrs. Wallingford?" he asked.

"I think that is her name."

"Do you mean to say you never heard of her?"

"Never. There is no need to pretend that I know New York. I do not."

"Ever see the great William B. about here?"

"William B.?"

"Large man with a slight limp."

"Oh, you mean—I thought—isn't that her father?"

"He is here then!"

"What do you mean?" I asked impatiently.

"I'll come around some day and tell you," Chester said.

"She seemed to take an interest in you," I said, "but I suppose you are accustomed to that."

"I don't believe I care to encourage any interest on the part of Mrs. Wallingford. William B. is said to stop at nothing. I might find myself dead some evening."

He walked along with me for a moment and then he laughed again. "I have just treated myself to Burton's Arabian Nights," he said. "A wonderful book which ladies of course never read."

"It contains a good deal of human nature which is western as well as eastern," I said absently.

"Oh—you have——?" Chester began.

"I was speaking of the usual edition. The Burton, of course, never gets into general circulation," I said.

"Conversational or otherwise?" Chester ventured.

But Mr. Babcock asked me a question and I made no reply.

## XVII

*My Neighbor*

Babcock had fallen in love with Genevieve. It was one of those passions which astonish us when they come to sober clever men and seemingly change every taste and habit of their lives. We have all seen men in the thrall of such a fascination.

The women of the Babcock family had been generally pretty and always commonplace, well born and bred, and doing in the appointed time the things which were expected of them.

Genevieve's caprice, her foreign education, her cheap cynicism played upon Elwin Babcock's nerves. She was a bit of gaudy color, and he had lived in a family life which was colorless. He had not gone into Bohemian society because that was outside his taste. He was ambitious to make a name for himself at the bar. He and Chester had fallen together at college because Chester lacked the means to keep up with the fast set. They had met on

the common ground of athletics; for while Babcock was small, he was sturdy and a capital football player, with the virtues and the hardness of that particular pastime, as one could figure out by looking at him.

I went frankly about ascertaining his fortune, by going to an agency which put me in possession of the bare facts. He had fifteen thousand dollars a year income from his grandfather, would have more when his mother died, and was making between four and five thousand dollars a year as the law partner of a relative.

Twenty thousand dollars a year was a better income in New York then than it is now, and he belonged to the best people in the town. I wanted Genevieve off my hands. I was afraid for her. I wondered if she would marry Babcock—and I did not dare to ask her, although no motives of delicacy hindered me, as with Lucile.

I had thought of my children always as pieces on my chess-board that could be moved about as I wished, but here was one that I could not count upon—one who might ruin us all.

Two days after the two young men called, Genevieve spent the whole afternoon out.

When she came in I asked her where she had been.

"To walk," she said, shortly.

"I do not wish you to go out alone, my dear," I said gently.

"This is not Paris—nor yet London," she returned indifferently. "When are we going away for the summer? It is suffocating here now."

I had been awaiting this moment and I was actually afraid to say outright that it was impossible for us to go at all. Indeed, I began to think it might be possible. I used to wonder what people meant when they talked about the influence of a strong will. I never remembered having been influenced by a strong will, but Genevieve taught me that in the case of a daughter it is worked like a species of blackmail. If I did not do what she wished, she would most certainly do something I did not like.

I had had every drawer and box which belonged to Genevieve fitted with keys of my own, and I went through them for letters every time she went out. I had discovered nothing from London, and from her attitude I concluded that the affair I had nipped in the bud

had been merely a passing amusement on both sides. I found a locket with some diamonds on the outside, but nothing within.

"They say," Genevieve went on, "that a cottage at Newport is the best thing over here."

"We cannot afford that."

"You might send for old Prolmann and get him to take one." She did not look at me, but sprinkled paprika on her salad with an ostentatious care.

My heart stopped beating for a moment and then went heavily on. I had control of my voice by the second beat.

"He would doubtless do that to give his old friends pleasure, but he is very ill. You know he could not come to Lucile's wedding." And I looked straight into her insolent face.

The question of the summer was settled before long. Mrs. Dodds was going to Paris for a week or two, to come back on a yacht which her husband had leased from an Englishman. To please her cousin Elwin and to meet the Malpiers and have Lady Horton's sister as a guest, she asked to take Genevieve with her, and bring her back for the Newport season in August. It is expensive to stay with people of wealth like the Dodds, but there was

nothing else to do. Mr. Dodds was one of the new rich men who had married rather late in life into an old family. Robert and I would stay in the New York apartment and nobody would know the difference. But naturally we did not speak of that to Mrs. Dodds in all the hurry of her departure.

It was Mrs. Dodds who introduced me to Mrs. Wallingford. We met in the big square hall which had been the basement dining-room of the old house from which our apartment house had been converted.

The two ladies greeted each other with a half indifferent smile which lifted the corner of her soft mouth on the part of my fellow tenant, and something like embarrassment in the manner of Mrs. Dodds. We were going for a drive in Central Park in the Dodds's carriage.

When we were seated in the victoria Mrs. Dodds said almost apologetically, "I went to school with Lily Mainwaring and she was always an agreeable girl. Her marriage was most unfortunate. Of course I never knew the facts," she added hastily. "My husband will never have her at the house even for the largest affairs. He does not feel that the old family ties hold." Mrs. Dodds waited for

questions. She evidently had an impression that as she had introduced me to my neighbor she must tell me all about her. The introduction had been part of the embarrassment of the moment of meeting, something that her confusion had not known how to avoid. "Her husband is dead. He spent all of her fortune, and it is said"—more hesitation—"that he borrowed a great deal from her friends."

"Surely she was not to blame for that," I ventured.

"She was to blame for even marrying the man in the first place. She was at school in Paris when she met him. He was an officer in the English army, and a great deal older—and married."

"Married?"

"Yes. Imagine a girl ever thinking of a married man!" I saw that I must give Genevieve a word of warning for this visit with Mrs. Dodds. She might listen to advice concerning a thing which was going to affect her pleasure, as Mrs. Dodds's displeasure could do.

"I cannot," I said.

"Well, maybe she didn't. It may have been only himself. At any rate, he went back to

England, persuaded his wife to get a divorce or made her do so, changed his name, and came over here and married Lily Mainwaring. People accepted him before they knew all the story—and it is very difficult to drop people after they have been taken up. Then—he spent her money, and—well, entertained a good deal." She stopped.

"Isn't her father living?" I asked innocently, and then before Mrs. Dodds could answer, I went on, "I see him going up every day almost. A tall old man—with a limp."

Mrs. Dodds's face expressed excitement—but she was not a gossip. "That is Mr. William B. Clancy. He is—he was an old friend of—her husband. But you must be mistaken in thinking that he goes up there every day?" There was a distinct interrogation at the end of the sentence.

"I doubtless am," I laughed. "See how one may hypnotize oneself, and what human testimony is worth. I thought he was her father, and when I saw him once or twice, I imagined he came every day." She looked at me keenly. I knew that he came almost every day, that he stayed to dinner often, that a caterer's man came at seven o'clock with the

elaborate meal and stayed to see that it was sent into the dining-room. One hears a great deal in the shaft of a dumb waiter. But there is an old proverb which says that "Silence is the god of the lucky."

## XVIII

*My Neighbor's Ways*

After Genevieve had sailed away with advice as plain as I could give, I went up to Cambridge and Robert came home with me.

I found him much more agreeable than I had expected. Prolmann and his secretary and Madame Vestrine had done wonders for the boy. He was still a boy, of course. In that lay his charm.

There were no complaints from him when the smothering heat of July came upon us. Some days we would take the boat to Long Branch, on others we would go up to the casino in the park or to Claremont for dinner. But our own little cold dinners in the negligee of home and in the half dusk were more comfortable.

I grew fond of Robert then. He had a sweet nature—too sweet a nature, I felt sure, to make his way in the rough and tumble of the financial world. And yet he had no real mind for a profession. I thought a good deal of Robert's future.

It was in July that we became friends with

Mrs. Wallingford. For some days I had not seen "the Great William B." limping up the stairs, nor had I heard the sounds of gay laughter and the popping of champagne corks. One morning I read in my *Herald* that Mr. Clancy had gone west upon an important railroad matter. He would go on to the northwest and be gone a month. I was sure from the sounds above that Mrs. Wallingford was still in the house. The caterer came as usual, but with no such elaboration of equipment. I could open the door of the dumb waiter and see what went up, as well as the champagne bottles and *pâté terrines* that came down in the mornings. Sometimes there had been broken china and glasses after a particularly lively supper.

Mrs. Wallingford seemed to have few women visitors and most of them came in the morning. In the evenings and afternoons of the first month we came, there had been three constant visitors. Usually they came separately, but sometimes they happened in together. They almost never all dined there, but sometimes I heard all three voices at supper. There was a delightful big bow window in each back room of the apartments. I used

this room for my bed-room, but evidently Mrs. Wallingford used hers for a dining-room, for I could hear the sounds of supper in the window on warm spring nights. I could hear very few words, but enough to know that the big, athletic, highly-colored clergyman who was so often a guest, was not leading Mrs. Wallingford and her friends in prayer.

This clergyman I once went to hear preach later, simply to become accustomed to the cadences of his powerful voice. I sat in a pew in his well-filled church and heard him preach practical life. His text was from Habakkuk: "Woe is him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also."

His congregation was made up of all sorts of people, as the pews were free and he had admirers in all classes, but I doubt if any of them enjoyed that sermon as much as I did.

Church had grown to be a habit with me, and it was not until the next autumn that I discovered that Mr. Bliss—Mr. Bliss of Fowlersburg—had charge of the most fashionable church in New York. When I heard it I laughed, and I made one comment to myself: "You cannot keep us down!"

It came to my ears later that Mr. Bliss was now exercising his tact toward a very rich, very stupid man, whose temper had been soured by the social successes of a sister-in-law who was then in the act of leading the family into the giddy heights of "society." This sister-in-law, as a matter of fact, created the "new" society in New York, the society which is founded upon money. She had a sense of humor and no bump of reverence. When her heavy brother-in-law asked for reverence, as the head of the family, she gave him the sort of laughter which he furiously likened to the crackling of thorns under a pot. She asked "society" to go to the great house he had built and see how funny he and his wife were. She entertained guests with stories of the economies of a man whose income was three millions a year.

Mr. Bliss soothed the baited one's sore nerves by showing him how he could distance her by becoming a great philanthropist. Incidentally, Mr. Bliss became his almoner and a part of his church. Mr. Bliss had first been a mission worker in New York. He left Fowlersburg because in a moment of a return to nature he married the paid organist. I went

to Mr. Bliss' church. He welcomed me with solemn joy. I was the mother-in-law of Lord Horton. Like Chester, he needed friends of his youth who were presentable in his new field of action.

This story has no coherence, I see. I digress like any other old woman.

The third friend of Mrs. Wallingford was a mystery to me for a long time. I should never have dreamed of asking questions of the janitress, and it would have done no good had I done so, as Mrs. Wallingford's visitors were more than freehanded. But one day I saw his picture in the *Herald* and recognized it, with a tingling shock. He was one of the greatest of financiers, a man whose projects were worldwide—greater even than "the great William B." He was a thin, spare, active-looking man, with brilliant eyes set very close together. I studied his face with curiosity. These men made Mrs. Wallingford very interesting to me.

My admiration for her was acute at first, and then—what a fool she was to risk her reputation! Both of these men were married. So was the clergyman, but I left him out. What was she doing? What was she going to do?

The situation lay there before me like a puzzle, and the great question finally became, what was I going to do? To let this situation alone was impossible. I needed too much. Do not imagine that I put it to myself like that. But rich men, men who juggled with the finances of the world, were valuable friends, if one knew how to use them. That Mrs. Wallingford did not know.

The hall of the apartment house was simply the old basement front room. (The janitress pigged along in a room or two behind.) It had been made pretty with stained glass, an open fire-place and soft couches. It was an easy place to linger for a moment before mounting the stairs, and one day I was there waiting for Robert to come downstairs, when Mrs. Wallingford came in. She looked pale from the heat and sat down hastily, almost struggling for breath. Robert came down the stairs and faced her, as she sat there pale and exhausted. He gave a soft little exclamation of concern at the sight of her suffering, and taking up a palm leaf fan, which lay on the table, began fanning her.

"May I get you a glass of water, some wine—anything?" he asked. His manner was

perfect. He had never seen her before. She looked at him gratefully with her pretty, one-sided smile which showed a dimple in her cheek. She was almost as old as I, but there was an indefinable girlishness about her, something sweet, appealing, tender.

I joined my solicitude to Robert's. She assured us that it was a momentary faintness due to the heat. She had not been well of late. She ought to get out of town.

Robert (whom I had introduced as my son) went upstairs with her.

The next morning I mounted to her apartment to ask about her health. I found her in a bed-room which should have been preserved in a museum as typical.

She had taken the dark middle room just back of the "parlor" as her bed-room. The bed was on a dais which jutted out into the room, the head coming against the wall. At first in the dim rose-shaded lights this bed looked like something very handsome, and then I saw what it was. An old-fashioned four poster bedstead had been painted old ivory color and set against the wall. Between the posts at the head had been hung a high relief of Della Robbia's singing boys in plaster with

an ivory finish. From the ceiling swung a canopy of rose-colored tarlatan in full folds, enveloping the bed and the dais. The walls of the room had first been covered with pink and then hung in full folds of the tarlatan. Folds of the thin stuff draped the dressing-table, which glittered with ivory and gold. A cheval glass, and a six-fold screen of mirrors, set in gilt garlands, enlarged the room and reflected all this soft rosiness, which was full of the scent of orris and carnation, making a peculiar, pungent combination which took my nerves. Hot as it was, there were a half dozen candles lighted under pink shades. Mrs. Wallingford lay on the wide bed in a nightgown (if you could imagine so wonderful a creation as made for darkness) which showed her neck and arms. Across her feet was a spread of lace lined with pink, each fold as exact as though it had been drawn by a rule and compass. She did not seem to be reading. There was no light sufficient for reading. She was simply lying there like a great white rose in her pink nest. Even the lace handkerchief in her hand seemed to be arranged as part of the picture.

She was most agreeable, almost cordial in a languid way. And with a childish *naïveté* she

asked about Robert, and told me to ask him to come and see her.

"He was so kind," she said.

As I went downstairs I met Van Nest, the great financier, with his bright eyes glancing at me curiously, coming up the stairs. I did not wonder how long Mrs. Wallingford kept him waiting, he, whose time was so precious, while she dressed for a visitor.

## XIX

*I Plant a Seed*

In the days which followed, we came to know Mrs. Wallingford very well, and I think she felt that we were a godsend to her indolent life. She of course knew something of us, or thought she did, and like all women in her position, she may then have dreamed of having some friends who might make her independent of the society which was bit by bit drawing away from her.

She was almost simple-minded, disarmingly so, almost lovable in her ingenuousness, although love for her was inhibited in me by the contempt with which she filled me. She seemed to have no will-power at all, no reserves except the reserve of indolence. She gave of herself out of her sweetness, as a flower gives perfume. It was a sensuous perfume, something that troubled. I could reconstruct her marriage. I could picture to myself that young girl who met the admiration of everybody with kindness and who had no

hardness anywhere with which to rebuff. The older man had simply taken what she had no power to refuse—and history was doubtless repeating itself.

Nature is never more blandly oblivious of our frantic civilization than in a woman like this. Is she a weed or a flower? What is a flower except a weed that appeals to some one of our senses. Our scheme of civilization is utilitarian, founded on the inheritance of property, and this woman will never keep in line. The women who do are quite right in condemning her, in pushing her out of the way.

I knew that Mrs. Wallingford had no money. Every one possessed that bit of information, and yet she spent money lavishly. She seemed to have no idea of its value. I saw very soon that the expenditures of the little apartment would serve to keep up a house. I doubt not, in fact I know, that the portfolio in her gay little Louis XV. desk grew packages of pink bank notes, that her debts were paid by a "secretary." She gave ways and means no thought at all. She rested upon life as tranquilly as she rested on her rosy bed.

It was through an accident that I met Mr. Van Nest.

I too was a little bored. New York was very dreary and depressing, and sometimes when the silence above told me that my neighbor was alone, I would go up in the evening with Robert. The boy must have some one upon whom to practice his social graces, and Mrs. Wallingford was thirty-five.

One evening we had gone upstairs about nine. We found the lattices of the drawing-room wide open to catch the air, the pink-shaded candles few and dim, and Mrs. Wallingford a fluff of white lace lying idly in a long chair. We came in without disturbing her, and sat and talked of the heat, of the nothings which make up so much of social converse that it seems wonderful that we should take the trouble to speak.

Robert told her of some old French songs which Madame Vestrine had given him, and he went downstairs and brought them up. They lighted the candles at the piano and tried them over, the quaint music, written for a spinnet, the sentimental old words sounding strange in their full rich voices with the piano.

Mrs. Wallingford's maid opened the door and a man came in. Mrs. Wallingford turned her face over her shoulder, smiled, and with-

out other greeting mentioned Van Nest's name and mine, and went on with her song. No proof of intimacy could have been more complete.

He sat down beside me in the window and presently we talked. After the song was finished Mrs. Wallingford came over with Robert, and I would have gone, but they begged us to stay and I found in Van Nest an attitude which puzzled me then. He seemed glad that we were there and he wanted to keep us. He spoke to me frankly of Mrs. Wallingford's loneliness, and showed that he knew that we had lightened it. He said that she would not go away. And there was that in his voice, gratified vanity, whatever it may be, which gave me to understand that she would not go while he remained.

It was late when we left them, and I would have given anything to have sat downstairs and gone over that affair with some intelligent human being. When Henry and William James gossip, how delightful they must find it!

We saw as much of Van Nest during the next ten days as though he had been a friend. My "ignorance" of New York stood me here. I knew nothing from gossip, of course; how

could I? And I am sure that in Van Nest's eyes I was too innocent, too stupid, to see anything for myself. It has been my lot to understand why men like fools of women. They have shown it to me, because they have so often done me the honor to consider me half-fool. Men love to talk, to pose before a mirror, as it were, and they want the mirror to be shallow and really to hold no permanent reflections. They do the posing for their own pleasure and want to leave no records.

Here and now, as many other times, I ached to be my own self. How I wanted to show myself that I understood this man, whose mind was considered so great that kings and emperors had sought his society that they might learn some of his secrets for their people. Truly to interest is so easy that I wonder why any woman is uninteresting, if that is her chief care. All that is necessary is to know what is in the mind of a man at the moment and throw a new light on it, or play with it, so that he has a chance to bring it out into the open. Nobody on this earth cares for any truly new thing that has not a vital association with (not *the* present) *his* personal present. Wit only reaches its point when it is a

new light upon what we already love or hate. And what trivial things were in the mind of this "great" man! It did not take me long to realize that his greatness consisted simply in seeing the world small. It was as though he had a world in miniature before his eyes, like a living map—like a game. Here was a line of steamships, and here a railroad, so much corn grew in this section, the population yonder consumed so much. Some other man who owned something which this man wanted had no map, and was like a blind man going over a path which he vaguely knew from having been led over it by some predecessor. It was easy for the man with the map in his head to bewilder that blind man, put him in a new path, alter his goal, and take his business.

But something which this man with the vision of the earth did not see small was himself. I could see how all at once in his later years there had come to him a sudden feeling of fright—that there was something he had missed. It was something that all the poets, the painters, the historians even, had agreed was the greatest thing in the whole universe, the thing which gave savor to everything else. And he, like thousands of other men married

in their youth, had never felt it. I could imagine how Mrs. Wallingford's one-sided smile, her tender eyes, her air of "*I am kind, let me love you—I am kind,*" had first made him believe that this was still possible for him. It was something that she could not help, for which she was in no sense morally responsible, if after all, anybody is morally responsible for anything. Why is a too soft heart, a desire to be held and protected and sheltered, different from a soft complexion? Do we create ourselves? In his very dignified Gifford lectures, Prof. William James of Harvard tells of a woman who said she "loved to cuddle up to God." To some women the understanding of God is not given, although the instinct to "cuddle" is there.

I saw much in this week, and the chief thing was that I must get away. I was growing too intimate with the great Van Nest; and the thought that I, with my ambitions, should be flying from that possibility gave me smiles. But I was on the wrong road, and if I went farther I should be hopelessly lost. Mrs. Wallingford would not do. I suppose had I at this time ventured one hint to Van Nest he would have given me a "tip" on the market or even

made some investments for me—and despised me forever after. As I have clearly seen many times, money may be purchased too dearly. The bare possibility of money is so often the lure which ruins. But then *Æsop*, who pictured most things, gave us that too in the long ago in his dog and stream story.

One evening Mrs. Wallingford brought Mr. Van Nest downstairs to us, and he asked Robert and me to go off for a cruise in his yacht with Mrs. Wallingford.

I thank God for presence of mind. I produced a telegram calling me to West Virginia the next day, but there was no reason why Robert should not go. I had many thoughts over the situation. I had waited late at night for Robert to come bright-eyed down the stairs. The boy was not a fool and he had attracted Mrs. Wallingford in a way which had probably never come to her before. I let my fancy go as to the effect this sudden intimacy of theirs,—the woman whose ties seemed to be so many and the boy whose ties were all to make,—would have upon those who claimed her attention. In the necessities of the case there could be no violence of any sort. If Robert was to be eliminated it would most

naturally be by that method known as kicking him upstairs to bed. His reluctance to betake himself to innocuous rest would doubtless measure the distance to which he was elevated.

Two days after my talk with Mr. Van Nest, I went down to Fowlersburg, leaving Robert behind.

We sat in the window the last evening, my only son and I, and talked of many things—of the letters from Lucile, of little Jane at school, of Madame Vestrine.

"I am gratified that you had the association with a woman of the world," I said to him.

"She made me see life a little more broadly," he answered.

"She had been disappointed in her own son."

"I think," Robert said hesitatingly, lighting a new cigarette, "that he was what she should have expected. She married a man she should never have married—for love, so called. Her son was born of that union."

I sat there gasping. I think I almost blushed at these words from the boy.

"What could she expect except a lapse from the highest civilization?—a return to nature?"

"I am beginning to think," I allowed my-

self to say, "that the rule does not hold good. I married your father for love."

"But, would you if he had been a laborer on your father's farm?"

Truly, I felt that in my son Robert there might not be great force, the great energy which is but another name for fighting instinct, but there was more insight than in most. I might even, in time, take him into my confidence. As a matter of fact I never have. Our manner to each other is, however, one of complete understanding.

## XX

*Fowlersburg*

My visit to Fowlersburg interested and amused me more than any experience I had ever had in my life. Now it was that I thoroughly realized what an education the passing years had been to me, what new vision and understanding was mine. How sorry I felt for those who, seeing, saw not. When I left Fowlersburg I had had nothing real with which to compare people. I valued them wrongly, sometimes too high and sometimes too low. Here on one little canvas was the drama of life,—all within one's vision, not partly hidden as in larger places. I do not wonder that it is the men from small towns who go to cities and control them. It is a simple problem as soon as they learn, as Van Nest had learned, that great concerns follow exactly the same laws as small ones. Society is necessarily much the same everywhere, being made up of individuals of the human family. Again, here in Fowlersburg I thought how little the ma-

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jority of the world sees. When I went out to "tea" (it was "supper" when they were not entertaining) or to the various forms of entertainment to which they invited me, almost every one expressed surprise that I did not find it dull in Fowlersburg. "Why?" I sometimes asked.

"Oh, but you must miss society. Although," they would often add, "I suppose you realize its hollowness." (I wonder who was the first person to call society "hollow.") "But even so," they would go on, "there are all the advantages of music and the drama."

And I used to answer politely, and look at the speaker and fairly ache to tell her that she was a character in a drama, that the stage could never produce anything so interesting.

Isn't it strange that people will die of ennui in the midst of a life and people that would thrill them with interest if it were shown to them through the eyes of another?

Fowlersburg fairly reeked with characters—and they lived stories, too, which are worthy of an artist in narrative. One woman down there possessed my mind. Often I have seen a landscape which for an instant developed itself through an atmosphere which made my heart

ache because I was not Corot that I might record the fleeting Mona Lisa smile of mysterious nature. So Mrs. Cavendish tormented me. She was old, old in body, and her spirit was young and hated her old body and tried to hide it. She came to "tea" with us one evening when Mrs. Ward had invited a number of her old friends, and she sat there gay of voice, youthfully dressed, wigged, scattering the witticisms, the theories of life, the anecdotes that she had taken from years of reading but which her audience accepted as original, her poor, lined, parchment-like old face covered by a heavy veil hanging from a "picture hat," which she lifted for each mouthful of food. Is there anything in fiction, in drama, if you will, stranger than this woman? How Thackeray would have loved her!

Mrs. Ward came to take me home with her the day I reached the town, which I had found greatly changed. The hotel was a new one, rejoicing in its modern improvements of fringed napkins, blue glass finger-bowls and red brussels carpets. The food in that land of plenty was tough or canned, and to me, a little dainty about what I ate in these latter years since the flavor of the pickled pork which was

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my husband's favorite dish had gone from my palate, it was impossible. When my old acquaintance came to see me, I rejoiced at the prospect of being asked out to supper, and my joy shone in my face.

Mrs. Ward was noticeably nervous. She had put on her best dress, which was a black grosgrain silk trimmed with jet, and a new pair of shoes. The yellow soles of those new shoes, and the tight strings to the black lace bonnet which sat, narrow and assertive, on the tightly crimped hair above the pretty forehead, gave me my first hint of what an important person I had grown to be in Fowlersburg.

"Chester said he had seen you in New York, and that you were just like old times"—she held me away from her and looked at me with real affection. "I couldn't believe that you'd come back just the same old neighbor that used to pass cake over the fence." I had forgotten the cake-passing episode because it was never a habit of mine, but it had evidently become part of my history since my daughter had married a lord, and I was ready enough to accept it. Mrs. Ward belonged to one of the real old blue-blood families of the state. Quite unconsciously she was taking me into an

intimacy which, with all the respect we had had in Fowlersburg in those old days I had never enjoyed. I had never been really one of them.

"And now," she went on, "if you can put up with us, won't you bring your trunk and come up and stay? Now Chester has gone, I'm all alone. Sometimes it seems to me I can't stand it."

"I should think," I ventured later, when I had put on my bonnet (I had put on mourning for my father down here) and gone home with her, "that you would go to Washington and make a home for Chester."

"I would in a minute, but he doesn't think it best. You know his friends are all very wealthy people, and he has to make as good a show as anybody. If you do not, Chester says, people will think you are nobody, and if that happens he never will get any business, Chester says."

The refrain to every sentence was, "Chester says." Chester was the heart of her life, and like many another mother she sat at home and economized that her son should have "his chance." I wondered what my children would have done had that been my ideal of duty. I

suppose the sort of teachers of ethics who preach in pulpits or newspaper editorials would assure me that they would have made good Americans, that the iron of self-reliance would have developed in them as it had in their father and in me, that I had dwarfed their lives by having miserable snobbish ideals myself and educating them, forcing them, into false positions. That may be, but unfortunately I notice that the young men and women, and even the older ones, who were educated in all of these strong American ideals consider the finest flower of their success an admission into the society where my children live, of which they are a part. Lucile, my good narrow Lucile, who in her natural environment would have read papers on "The Influence of Byzantine Architecture on Russia," to Fowlersburg women who have never seen a Russian in their lives, is a figure of importance even in her own world of English political and social life, just as she would have been in the small world of Fowlersburg; the big world of England being made up of precisely the same sort of people with a different education.

This is not a popular theory, it is simply the truth.

I grew very fond of Mrs. Ward. I was not only approved by Chester, but I was a constant source of pride to her. She took excited pleasure from reading in the grimy little evening paper which was thrown over the fence at supper time every day, that the mother of Lady Horton, who was an attractive addition to the English peerage, was the guest of Mrs. Sarah Canfield Ward of Tenth Street. There followed the usual spread-eagle account of Lucile's beauty and accomplishments which made her "the pride of royalty," the paper said.

Mrs. Ward used to sit up half the summer nights to ask me questions concerning the habits of the Queen of England and her family. To my amazement I discovered that there was not a sixteenth cousin of a royalty in Europe whose history was unknown to my hostess. She had had a Virginia uncle who was a traveled young man, and in his youth had once come across that adventurer who eloped with the Prince Consort's mother, and after her death carried her embalmed body about Europe in his luggage until Queen Victoria persuaded him to bury it. Mrs. Ward enjoyed scandals, but her kindness of heart

prevented her from believing or repeating the stories of laxity which are always rife in a town like Fowlersburg, where the people grow into a liking for coarse intellectual flavors through a lack of education in the finer. Few of those who repeat scandals concerning their friends believe the stories. They go on receiving and visiting, in these small towns, ladies concerning whom tales are told, whose shocking coarseness is the invention of the lowest minds. Mrs. Ward, a little sentimental, truly sweet, would have none of this; but undoubtedly she revelled in the "romances" of royalty, and she listened breathless to the story of the Duchess of Belcourt. I had actually *seen* this heroine of romance.

I had a pleasant summer down there and I grew very, very fond of Mrs. Ward. Chester made a flying visit home, and would have given me some of the attentions due a young woman, but I grew suddenly old and almost frumpy during his stay, and closer than ever to his mother. I could not afford to have the one servant in the house carrying tales of "Chester Ward and the widow." I was a quiet, black-clad, head-achey little figure during his stay, which was not long.

It was during this visit that my trustees kindly offered to relieve me of my "wild lands." But a word from Mr. Van Nest had fallen on my ear, and something of his way of looking at this earth we live on had been for an instant possible to me. "West Virginia," Van Nest had said, "is the most interesting and curious state in this Union. It is practically a virgin state, rich in mineral as any one of the western states, and right here at the markets for its coal and iron." At any rate I could add this opinion to my assets.

I gently, timidly, mentioned this (quite as an original opinion) to Mr. Less, and was met with a slight lifting of the eyebrows and a superior smile.

"There is, I believe, coal on the land, is there not?" This was pure guess work upon my part, from Mr. Van Nest's remarks.

"It may be—a little," Mr. Less said, "but it is quite undeveloped and far from markets. There is no possible chance of the Pennsylvania coal fields allowing West Virginia coal to take any place for another hundred years, and by that time your land will be eaten up by taxes. You had much better give it away. I advise you to take any offer for it."

"But," I said, more and more timidly, "my husband must have had some reason for buying it, and I think I should keep it for the children." Then I met with some of that bullying which, had I been really the weak, gentle, almost tearful little woman I seemed, would have certainly been successful. Less assured me that as an executor of my husband's will he must insist upon my taking his advice. "Your children will never forgive you. You have a duty to perform toward them. When your husband left you everything, he left it as a trust, with me as adviser to you."

"He must have wanted the children to have it," I said obstinately. Mr. Less even sent the clergyman to remonstrate with me, and Mrs. Ward, through a sense of duty, told me that Mrs. Less had told her that my obstinacy had caused Mr. Less sleepless nights. But even for him I could not give up my "estates," and his "sleepless nights" made me certain of what I had begun to suspect—that somewhere in the future there might be something.

I slipped through that summer enjoying the social spectacle of Fowlersburg and as always, everywhere, learning, learning. Somebody has said somewhere, that there is no book so

stupid, so banal, that it does not contain some scraps of information. Surely there is no community of people which is not teeming with illustrations of success and failure and the roots thereof. Psychology is the most interesting study in the world, and now that I have time I shall search out its rules as formulated by the wise. But there are no new examples to present to me; I have seen them all.

Robert did not write me full letters, merely notes from here and there. He spent much of his time on the yacht of Van Nest.

By the papers I saw that "the great William B. Clancy" was again in the social world, entertaining magnificently at Newport. Mrs. Wallingford never went to Newport, though sometimes to Narragansett; but wherever she went Robert was in her train. That he did not get into the newspapers was to me an evidence of infinite tact. Every Sunday's edition I took up with the fear of seeing his frank smiling face looking out in a "half-tone."

It was not long before Genevieve appeared in the accounts of Newport. She had spent a great deal more money than we could afford, while in Paris, and the results seemed to be showing at Newport. How I prayed that one

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of the young—or old—millionaires would take her off my hands! She seemed to be having a success with what was in those days known as “the Brass Band” set. Genevieve was past-mistress of the art of insolence, and in that company there were plenty of glass houses. This caused her to “get along,” but it did not marry her off. In any set a man wants something more intimate than a battering ram for a wife. When one like Genevieve is chosen it is usually because she has been idealized. No man ever really knows a woman even after he marries her. It is not because she is difficult to understand, or indeed different from a man of the same type. It is simply that he must see her through the film of sex.

To most people Genevieve was antagonistic. Underneath even her best manners men felt her contempt for them,—the contempt born of a friendship for Lili, a contempt that I knew was in the beginning born of *me*, but which I had almost always succeeded in hiding even from myself. Through Genevieve’s short letters there was always a strain which “rubbed me the wrong way.” I was angry that even I was shown her unpleasantness. A woman of wisdom, a safe woman, hides her worst traits.

Sometimes I answered these letters in a manner which made my cheeks burn as I put the words on paper. And then—I destroyed what I had written. I did not intend to have anything in my family save sweet peace.

How I writhed under Genevieve's vulgarity! All the more because some of it came to her through me. We talk a great deal of mother-love. It is truly the passion of my life. What have I lived for, save my children? They are my immortality. They have in them *Me* with a new start. And yet how well I understand a cruel parent! It is their own sins, their own vices, their own tendencies born again, that they are crushing. How I pitied and hated Genevieve's ignorance! Pity is the feeling to give those who are called "bad." These "New Thought" people have stumbled into a truth or two. "Goodness" means nothing except the element of growth,—the thing which is "good" for us, for our bodies, our minds, our general happiness,—and "bad" is degeneration, decay. That is why codes of morals are different in different civilizations. Polygamy was right and "blessed of God" when a vast new land must be peopled, but when we are confronted with a greater population than the

earth can comfortably feed nothing can be so "bad." The "bad" in this world—those who grow ugly with sin—are those who do not know how to extract the sweetness from the world, to live in harmony with their place and time.

For Genevieve personally I could be said to have no love, for myself I had a great deal, and I sacrificed much that her way should be easy. I kept up a constant correspondence with Mrs. Dodds, and I asked Lucile to write to her also. I wished to surround Genevieve, to soften by the cushions of our conventionality, our correctness, the angularities of her nature. She must not be just for self, but also for Lucile and me.

And while I was bolstering Genevieve, her triumphs at Newport were assisting me. I smiled sometimes at the flattering attentions given me by the young girls in Fowlersburg. Each of them saw herself, in fancy, sharing our life in New York. They were insistent that I should bring Genevieve down and allow them to give her a "good time."

It was in the middle of August that Mrs. Van Nest died and I saw by the papers that Mr. Van Nest had taken his two daughters and gone abroad.

Mrs. Wallingford went somewhere on the Maine coast, and when next I heard from Robert the letter was written at her cottage there.

## XXI

*I Add to My Income*

There seemed to be nothing for me to do but to take a house in New York. The apartment had been a blunder. Mrs. Wallingford was an acquaintance I could not afford to have, nor could we afford to be hidden in an apartment. Our vintage required the bush.

After infinite worry and trouble I found a house on Gramercy Park. It was too large, too expensive, but I would risk one year of it. I was forced into it. Genevieve drove me. She fancied that it was entirely by her brutal will and I was indifferent concerning her thought. I wanted to do what I could for her ultimate happiness, that she might be at least no disadvantage to the rest of us. To do the best for her was instinct with me simply because she was my child. It had nothing to do with my heart or head. It was primitive.

I was terribly anxious now about money. Some nights my fears caused me to see myself building a fire of my last possessions,—this

using of money like millionaires when we had almost nothing. I determined that when we reached the bottom of the forty thousand dollars of life insurance which my husband had left me I would stop. And then—what would Genevieve do?

But the problem of finding a larger income somewhere, somehow, was ever before me. If I had been left alone I should probably have made a fair business woman, but my mind was developed in another direction. My income must come from something which I could do secretly. Those advertisements in the newspapers offering ladies "occupation at home" must have been started by a student of social conditions, but I was not sufficiently stupid as to try that avenue to fortune.

The time I chose to come to New York marked some sharp changes. For example, what is known as "yellow journalism" was first sufficiently conspicuous among intelligent people to acquire the name. All sorts of replies have been made to the question as to why it was named "yellow." It really came from an editorial by Charles Dudley Warner, in *Harper's*, I think. He wrote apropos of "The Yellow Book"—which was then new—and said

that literature was "getting the yellows" like a sick peach-tree. But did you ever stop and think that there is some nerve-irritating force which flows from the color yellow? I wonder if the critic who will grow sarcastic over that statement doubts that red inflames the bovine nature? The French, those experts in the study of nerves, first discovered its peculiar quality, and put yellow outside their novels as a cryer of the wares within. It was at this time that a publisher brought out a cheap magazine in yellow—yellow outside and mental spoon-food within—and promptly discovered how many ignorant people there were in America who were pathetically in need of pre-digested information upon all subjects. The yellow called them and they rejoiced at finding "easy reading" within. I speak of this phase of New York life because I used it.

That picture of Lucile which had appeared in England had taught me something; in the first place, how easy it is to get into print, and in the second place, that here was a powerful weapon if one knew how to make it serve. But then all phenomena are but tools to the wise.

After we were settled in Gramercy Park, I

went to a branch post-office and secured a box in the name of "Mary Clay." I wrote a meek little letter to the editor of the newest of the sensational journals and told him that I had many opportunities for hearing the stories of "society" both in New York and Europe and that I should be very glad to sell this information to him—secretly. My first idea was to place my own name continually before the public in the best manner. We are like wax, all of us, ready for impressions. If we repeatedly hear a thing, we end by believing it. They say now that there is a physical reason for it,—that every thought makes a little channel in the brain like a crease in a sheet of once-folded paper. If the same thought runs along its channel many times it ends by changing the very structure of the brain. I wanted to be a part of the world's idea of fashionable life.

I found the pursuit of newspaper writing not only informing to the public upon my own standing, but profitable and exquisitely amusing. Out of pure caprice I made and unmade. My "stories" became so popular presently that they were to be found almost every Sunday occupying a full page in the paper I had chosen. Sometimes the photographs were

genuine and sometimes not, the stories corresponding. As Mr. Whistler has suggested, nature is inartistic and must be dressed up a little. I made the heroes and heroines of my tales better, and I made them worse as the exigencies demanded, and many a girl has headed into fame as an heiress and a beauty because I could put my hands on a handsome photograph of her. As I am not the only shrewd American woman, this idea fell into the minds of many others.

About this time the new magazine, whose editor was entirely untrammeled by traditions of any sort, and who was unable to see why a monthly magazine should be less frivolous and enlivening than a daily, began to publish a department called, "The American Beauty," and I was one of its most useful contributors. They used to pay me five or ten dollars apiece for those photographs, according to their rarity. Alas! How few of them were rare! Photographs and cheques "for my trouble," came upon me in an avalanche. The originals protested to their friends, sometimes even to me in my own person, when the very photograph they had pressed upon "Mary Clay" was published. And they used to say very unkind

things about the owner of the magazine for his impertinence in presenting their faces to the public.

The Sunday newspapers published almost anything I sent. What did they care for the truth or falsity of a story, so it was sensational or amusing?

When I could get no American photographs I bought them from foreign photographers by many devious ways. Naturally, that there might be no libel suits, the American stories were fairly innocuous, vulgar to the last degree but not libellous. But the royalty and nobility of Europe could have any sort of story told of them, limited only by my imagination. And when, after one of my tales about royalty that touched the English common people on the raw, the very heir of the throne changed his plans and went to visit the family concerning whom the story was told, I grew reckless with my new power, and took a serious chance. I saw in a foreign paper that a certain well-known peeress was about to add a new bulwark to her husband's family. In another part of the paper was a notice of that Vienna physician who announced his power to change the sex of infants before their birth. I

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wrote a rapid account of this peeress' desire to have a son, and said that the doctor had sent a young assistant to England to prepare the food of the mother. I sent this story to my former maid in Paris and asked her to mail it there. I gave a Paris address. The paper published the story, and the peeress, luckily, gave birth to a boy. The story was reprinted in almost every newspaper in the world, and the czar of Russia sent for the Vienna doctor! And I alone of all the world could *laugh!*

I was and am ashamed of the newspaper connection. It was tawdry and cheap and undignified. I despised myself when I did that work, and I come so near despising myself when I tell of it, that it is with an effort that I write it down. It is as though I were painting my own portrait in oils and found myself compelled to put in some vulgarity of feature or expression. My only excuse is (if I made excuses, which I do not) that I needed the social help of newspaper notice at first and after that the money that was paid for my articles. I earned in this way what would have been the yearly income upon almost thirty thousand dollars; for the yellow journals and magazines paid very handsomely

for pictures and gossip in those days, before everybody went into the business of supplying them.

I even sometimes wrote book reviews. Everybody has some vanities. I think I know a good book when I read it, and I think I can tell why it is good. But I wrote only one good review for my papers. After that I confined myself to personal anecdotes of the authors. The authors themselves are generally happy to give an "illustrated interview" to anybody and to have photographs made of themselves and their most intimate surroundings. I did none of this interviewing. I suggested authors and poses to the papers and then rewrote the interviews. I am sure that many novels owed much to my artistic "reviews."

Naturally, I immediately saw a field here for myself. I would write a novel and advertise it by sensational articles. I fairly shivered with nervous delight as I thought of it. I felt as a scientific man must feel when he sees approaching a beautiful but unexpected end of an experiment. But like the scientific man more often than not, I had made a slight error in my calculations.

Primarily, of course, I had no message for the world which pushed me toward pen and ink. After the fact, authors who really say anything are always supplied by their solemn admirers with a preconceived plan to add to the world's knowledge. I have never discovered any of these. All artists produce their wares for money. That rule has been so general that the few exceptions merely prove it—and these exceptions are generally working for fame and doing mediocre work because it is affected work, "over the heads of the people." To do a thing professionally means to do it for the criticism of buyers. But after I had the idea, I went to my store of understanding and I took of my best material to make my book. I would write a real book. I had no beauties of style, but I had seen, and I knew that the coherent mind cannot express itself incoherently. What I knew I could say. I had wanted a real story of New York. Why should I not write one? I remembered Flaubert and Balzac. I will follow in the wake of these great ones, thought I.

As I look back, I enjoyed something in those months that should have warned me even then. When I closed my door and sat down at my

desk, I ceased to act. I became myself. I wrote down not the expedient thing, but what I actually knew.

My book was the story of Mrs. Wallingford. I loved every page of the manuscript because on every page was something I knew to be true. And I even descended to the sentimentality of dreams. "Mary Clay" would not only advertise it, but the great critics must understand it—and some day I might even claim it as my own.

Ah, but I was inexperienced! I believed that the first publisher who saw it must take it. He must recognize that here was a study of a present condition of our civilization,—a pound of real living flesh cut from the social body.

After all my experience of men, after all my experience of the world, I still had that rag of superstition that publishers and juries are different from other people, and I, believing myself intelligent, expected understanding. But publishers are only—Oh, Unenlightened Ones!—a collection of business men whose constant effort it is to supply the public with what they know they want. To look at a new thing and choose it, guessing that the public

will want it, is the part of the psychologist, the genius, or the bankrupt.

I sent my story to a publisher who kept it seven weeks. Then I wrote a note and asked about it. He returned it. The enclosed letter said that it was original and clever, but there was not enough story. Mrs. Wallingford neither married nor died, and she was hardly sufficiently young to make a heroine. If I could introduce a sweet young girl as a contrast, make the young girl the heroine and show her against the shadowed background of Mrs. Wallingford, I might have a story.

The next publisher said that it was "clever." (They all know that useful word.) But it was not moral. The better class of American people would not stand a book in which immorality was not used as a lesson. They could see no lesson in the story of Mrs. Wallingford. She did not suffer. She pointed no moral. Then it was that I discovered that to the average human being—and a publisher who has not at least half his brain in sympathy with the average could not make a living—physical well-being and a fair place in society is success. That a fine nature goes astray through circumstances and loses its fineness is no tra-

gedy to the public so long as the body is clothed and fed and of fairly good repute. This publisher said that he thought the story would work harm. It might have a sort of success but it could not be permanent.

I was growing meek now, and I studied the publishers. There was then a new publishing house made up of young men, one of whom had a reputation as a critic. They had published a number of commonplace books, but one of late whose vulgarity was startling. It was so bad in every way that the critics had hardly touched it, but it was selling because the author did not know it was vulgar, and consequently gave his readers no clue. They read as ingenuously as he wrote. Here, thought I, is a publisher who cannot say that this book is immoral. At least he cannot object to it upon that account. And this critic who is in the firm, this man who *knows*, surely he can see what Mrs. Wallingford means. He can see that she is no more immoral than life itself, because she is actually true to life. That she is a reality is a pity, and that she is to be pitied. That she does not suffer—that she has no tears for herself—is the core of the tragedy. Surely he can see.

He did. He wrote me that they would accept the book, but that my "frank treatment of the relation between the sexes would cut my book off from a market that it would reach if more heed were paid to the American point of view." And they must ask me to omit those passages that would thus give offense. I was impatient for publication now, and I agreed. They returned the manuscript with the objectionable passages marked. I am wondering still what principle the editor used in making his corrections. Then and there I saw how absurd a task he had given himself—and I saw how many a promising book becomes incoherent. Suppose an art critic, a good one, were to object to a picture, say one of Rubens' or Sargent's, because it had lines of brutality. What would the world say if the critic undertook to paint out the objectionable lines and shadows? And yet this same thing is done in publishing houses every day.

I smoothed over the rough places, and let the manuscript go back to them. The book was accepted and was to be brought out in a month. The only reason a contract had not been signed was because I was wondering how I was to sign it. And then—one day I had a

humble letter from the firm asking me to allow them to return the manuscript. They had decided after all that it was not the sort of book they wanted.

My curiosity—simply my insatiable curiosity to understand motives—caused me to risk a visit to that publishing house. I presented myself as the friend of the author, not giving my name, and asked for an explanation. I discovered that the business man of the firm had finally read the book and declined it. The critic, whom I saw, paid the tale compliments, and every compliment he paid it damned it in my own eyes. He thought it a remarkable book. But he gently told me that it was too much like life. In it I was being natural—real—and the world no more wants the naked truth than it wants uncooked food. The business man was a citizen of the world as he found it, he hinted.

I saw life like that, too, I remembered, except for a curious blunder now and then. This had been one of my blunders. I took the manuscript home and reread it, and I laughed aloud. I reminded myself of that ridiculous creature who thinks she can do anything by intuition. Judge Grant has since shown her

in Selma White. My theme was good enough, and it was true, but the trouble was that I had not had the technical ability to do an original thing and do it well. How many people have? How many novels, readable novels, do you know that are not built on conventional lines? The unconventional ones are generally so badly made that they fall to pieces. And after all, isn't conventionality morality? Most people are unable to distinguish between them. As Robert Louis Stevenson reminded us, "Man lives not by bread alone, but mostly by catch words."

I took the manuscript over which I had dreamed, into which I had put what I knew of life, and laid it away. I had put what I knew of life into it of a certainty, but I had put it in so that it was unable to express itself to others. And with experience, I set about producing a book which the public would want—which a publisher, a piece of the public, would want.

Mr. Stanley Weyman had discovered Sully's Memoirs not long before this and was making historical novels fashionable. Mr. Anthony Hope had a moment's inspiration and put a modern Englishman into a setting of romance. I did not wish to be too obvious, and yet I had

learned to build my next house by an approved plan. If I had not the skill to be original, I must find a type to imitate. And then—an idea came to me. Suppose I were to take a well-known writer's style, even some of his well-known stock incidents (they all have them) and make an anonymous story which would seem to be too intimate a revelation of a woman's heart (it must be a woman, people have no sympathy with a man with a "heart" unless he be a poet) to allow her to sign her name to it. I could probably gather about my "heart experience" all of the author's readers, and some others. The anonymity, with my newspaper advertising, my scientific probing of the authorship, would attract attention. I spent days hunting for a writer who might have a "heart experience," and at last I discovered her. It was a painful, intimate story, but one which was known to many,—one upon which she had always kept a dignified silence. I bought every one of her books and studied them carefully and then I blocked out my tale—her tale—and wrote it in a high key. It was eminently respectable, and yet there was a suggestion all through it that the conventions might be broken. Sometimes when I finished

a page that raved like a respectable Zaza, I almost felt as though I meant it, as though those sad, sad experiences had been mine. Some astute critics have questioned since if the story was real. Here and there they have caught a gleam of humorous exaggeration; but never the buying public.

The story was accepted at once by one of the great magazines which was seeking some way to keep even with the more vulgar journals, and coming under such auspices the art was accepted as good art. I saw to it that public curiosity was whetted by full pages in the Sunday papers, and the author's sorrows were presently discussed by the ladies' reading club in Fowlersburg. Many things, however, happened before that came to pass.

## XXII

*We See Something of New York Society*

I had sublet my little apartment, and I had allowed my acquaintance with Mrs. Wallingford to become more and more formal, although Robert kept it up, I felt sure. I am also sure she never missed me and hardly had an idea that I had dropped her, although she had enjoyed my society. Her hold on women friends was lax and indolent. I had reason to believe that Robert saw her frequently.

Through Mrs. Dodds and other introductions, we began to go out more and more. My first move after I was settled in New York had been to unite myself with Mr. Bliss' church, and to take Genevieve there with me when I could. Mr. Bliss was excessively proud of our old friendship, and spoke of me often to the members of his fashionable congregation. I was always at his church on Sunday mornings, listening with an approving intelligence to ideas which I often recognized. Sometimes they were my own; but oftener they were Stendhal's or

Renan's or Tourguenieff's, first made into a *ragout* by me, and *rechauffé* by Mr. Bliss.

It was very seldom that I could take Genevieve with me. I could influence her in no ways except the most primitive. She was headstrong and unreasonable to the point of maliciousness, it would seem, but rather, it was to the point of ignorance. A cigarette, a French novel of the most abominable type were her Sunday morning relaxations. Sometimes I comforted myself with the reflection that she felt the antagonism for me which I felt for her, and that with the folly of youth and ignorance she was flaunting her worst self before me, out of a silly desire to hurt and annoy me. Surely she had not behaved like this with Mrs. Dodds. When I saw that the friendship between them, while not intense, was not broken, I knew that at least Genevieve knew how not to be entirely impossible. I discovered, too, that Mrs. Dodds had been wonderfully impressed, as are all Americans, by our titled friends, and probably Genevieve owed some toleration to that. Is it not quaint that the world, literally the whole world will call a man by a certain name and then grow cold with awe before him because he is known by it? "Duke," "Lord,"

"Prince"—what are they, anyway? Simply a gift from the tongues of the people.

It is a part of human nature to make a god of some sort and worship it. If a people has nothing better it will take the mud from under its feet and fashion it into something to bow before. But all the time, underneath, we all know that when we get ready to cry out altogether that the fetich is merely clay, the godship will disappear. Who cares now for the thunders of mighty Jupiter? One can blaspheme only the God that is behind the high altar of to-day. You may spit upon yesterday's god unrebuked.

Lucile had been gracious enough, but not too ready, to her sister's new acquaintance, and Mrs. Dodds had been impressed.

I discovered that there were just now two women whom it was necessary to know, to bring to my house, before I was firmly established in New York society.

One, Mrs. Etten, was a woman of enormous wealth who had climbed up to her present place over old prejudices and who was insolent with the power that had come to her. She was vulgar in her appearance, with a short ungraceful body and an animal-like nose. Her

hair was dyed a shade of dark red to hide the gray that had begun to appear in it, and she was *maquillée*.

The other woman was the sister of William B. Clancy, married to a man her equal in wealth and with children who had married into the old and influential families in Boston and Philadelphia as well as New York, and one daughter still with her. Mrs. Thomas was a woman not unlike the late Queen Victoria,—not very clever, obstinate, sure of herself, vain, and conventional. She was, I plainly saw, invincible because invulnerable. She utterly ignored us—seemingly never seeing us. Genevieve was of a type which she had plainly shown many times was distasteful to her. And although I was the last person to blame her for that, it made my task infinitely harder.

Mrs. Etten was easy to approach, because she had in her daily existence what she believed to be a secret. She was something like Lady Flora Hastings, with a difference of less breeding. Feeling insecure (it was that psychologist of forty-two years before the birth of Christ, Publius Syrus, who wrote down: "A guilty conscience never feels secure"), she was ready to give way anywhere.

Character is destiny, and it did not require a seer to see that Mrs. Etten was not solid in her place. I had, by chance, the opportunity to precipitate the scandal which came upon her a few years later, but I did not take it. Why should I? I have no time to waste upon idle spite, no time to cease rolling my stone up hill to cast down another. She was to me already off the board and one for whose favor I cared not at all.

With Mr. Clancy's sister it was different. I must have her acquaintance at least.

To be seen at her house was to have a sort of *cachet* of social respectability. I never was quite able to discover why she, in all New York, had this dignity, but so long as every one agreed that it was hers, it was. Notwithstanding she knew all about Lucile's position in London, we were not asked to her house at once. And as the winter went on I began to fear that we were, through Genevieve's folly at Newport, I felt sure, to rest just on the edge of what is known as real New York society. That was a situation which I felt that I could not tolerate.

Studio receptions were just becoming fashionable, and there was talk of "American art."

American art just then consisted in taking up some portrait painter who was socially eligible and having him make pretty presentments of ladies in evening dress. The sitters generally selected the gowns and poses, and patronized the artists. It has always been so. Romney and Sir Joshua Reynolds went through the same experience. In the studio of Romney all the sitters insisted on looking like Emma, and Sir Joshua plaintively complained that after he painted Nellie Farren all the duchesses desired to be portrayed with roguish eyes.

I had an idea. I wrote to the young artist in Paris who had painted my mother's portrait from that old crayon, and told him that I thought there was a field for him in New York. I might be mistaken, but I thought that here was something I could add to my forces.

He came, and painted Genevieve, and he did for her exactly what he had done for my mother's picture. He idealized her. He kept, in some intangible way, that physical force which was her only possession, but he seemed by some necromancy (the beautiful necromancy of his art!) to make it into a classic thing. The Helens, the Cleopatras, not of reality, but of tradition, might have had

an allure such as this. He painted Mrs. Dodds, and me. I let him have his way with my portrait, because I was curious to see what he would do with it. He painted me in a plain white satin gown, sitting on a marble seat, something like those in the garden at Verrière. That portrait has never had a frame, and it reposes in swathings in the house here in West Virginia. I think it is the woman who sits there on that bench who incited this narrative. No one has seen it except the artist and myself. And yet it represents a much more beautiful and intelligent woman than I ever was.

After it was finished, I asked for it, and suggested that the artist do something for exhibition. Tears came into his eyes. "It is the greatest thing I shall ever do," he said. "And it will delight me if posterity says so." I returned: "But I want something for New York. Do not mistake New York of to-day for the voice of Fame."

I appeared on a canvas at his exhibition in a violet velvet gown, and the portrait was chiefly gown,—a sublimated still-life.

One of the old magazines reproduced the portraits with an article upon the talented

artist. The editor of the magazine was of the class which was just then scorning "The American Beauty" department of the cheap magazine, and loudly deplored the "vitiating of taste," the "lowering of the standards" of the public, as exhibited by its popularity. But as no magazine was ever published for any other purpose than to produce a revenue, the "popular" methods were grasped at, and the editor was glad of an excuse to reproduce the portraits of "society" under the pretence of art. My artist was really so clever that the women who wished to appear at their best employed him, and my portrait appeared facing that of Mrs. Thomas.

Another one of my advantages came in my dinners.

Americans, generally, have never cared much about dinner giving for two reasons: a dinner is almost as expensive as a dancing party, and at that time very few of even the wealthiest people had servants who were able to carry a dinner to a triumphant conclusion. It has been within a comparatively short time that the brisk short menu has taken the place of that old, strained, elaborate dinner which nobody but Mr. Ward McAllister ever enjoyed.

Certainly not a hostess who sat in fear and trembling of what the next course might bring forth.

The second reason for not enjoying a dinner was that they didn't know what to talk about. For all our present-day smartness, American society is not so very far from the Christmas and Thanksgiving turkey feasts where husbands went out with their wives. And neither is England! Old people in England have told me of the dinners at Windsor Castle in the Queen's youth that were as bourgeois as anything social New York was showing. The Queen, in those days, used to sit at a table after dinner and play solitaire, and it was considered sufficient entertainment to her guests to see her do it.

It was no wonder that Mr. McAllister became a sort of social mentor in New York. He came from a part of the country where gaiety at least was considered well bred, and they had been entertaining in some fashion ever since they had four walls.

In France and in England I had learned to dine—and so had Genevieve. She had the technique of the game. The things she said might be a trifle impertinent, but she talked,

and she did not devote herself to the man who took her out. And I knew, thanks to Prolmann, how to give a dinner. I never learned how not to, for I had gone from Fowlersburg to Prolmann. It was I who first threw aside the half-dozen silly wines, and clung to champagne after the soup, and it was I who banished pastry trash. When I came, chicken salad was still a dinner dish in New York. And it was at my house in Gramercy Park that an opera singer first sang after one of my dinners, and after another two distinguished French actors gave a little dialogue. The opera singer I had known a long time. He had been a guest on Prolmann's yacht one year. The French actors had met a bad season in America and were willing to advertise themselves. It is impossible to get even "coon" songs on those terms now, but that sort of entertaining was new then and it created a sensation which my newspaper made much of. I was supposed to have paid all of these artists incredible sums. How I should have loved to have done so! Mean economies never appealed to me. It has always been my wish to pay more for a thing than it is worth, because I despise an obligation.

I acquired a reputation for having an incomparable chef whom I had brought from abroad (such was the rarity of delicious, hot, appetizing courses quickly following each other), and for an atmosphere of smartness. The last came from the fact that my son, my daughter and myself knew what sort of conversation to serve with the food. And it became a house to which men, business men, did not have to be dragged in chains, because they were well fed and amused.

There was one mistake I almost made about this time. I had thought that I might bring into New York the English and French fashion of entertaining celebrities, literary, political or scientific. Fortunately, before I had the opportunity to meet them I learned what a mistake it would have been. To belong to the "Literary Set" in New York is to be hopeless—to be forever cut off even from Mrs. Thomas' largest balls. And, anyway, even in England and France, literature is indulged in seldom. Most writers are impossible. Their energies have gone into another channel than that of what I might call bodily expression. They do not know how to dress, they are seldom pretty to look at, and I have met

very few who have any idea of conversation. They despise "society" because it makes them uncomfortable. It doesn't seem worth while to them; they have no key to its meanings. For life and literature are reality and artificiality. Art to be art must be a symbol. But that is something it takes experience to discover.

Bit by bit I crept into the eye of the world. There was never a moment when I could have been said to "push." I suppose when a mushroom pushes up a paving stone, the slab considers that it lifted itself out of politeness to a thing so tender and helpless.

I saw as little of Genevieve as she could arrange, but one day she came to me of her own accord. It was almost the first time she had done such a thing since she had left the convent—since her intimacy with Lili.

"Do you know that Bob is being talked about with Mrs. Wallingford?" she asked abruptly.

"I am sure you are mistaken," I answered gently. "How absurd a story! Mrs. Wallingford is old enough to be Robert's mother."

"Baby-snatching is not unknown even in New York. They say she is infatuated with

him and is throwing off even Clancy on his account,—that she intends to marry Bob."

"I shall believe no such ridiculous tale." And I took up my book again.

"*Cela m'est égal!*" Genevieve said, and then she turned to me swiftly, "I suppose the young fool knows that he hasn't a penny?"

"That is a fact you must all know," I said, and we looked at each other squarely in the face for a fraction of a second, curtains up. Then I went on. "Of course what I have is yours, and in time will be valuable. But Mr. Less, who was one of our executors, tells me that it may be many many years before our coal lands will be valuable."

"I thought it was tobacco," the girl sneered. "It used to be tobacco."

"It was always coal," I said patiently.

After Christmas my boy came to me and told me that he did not care to go back to college. He said he wanted to go into business.

"But where? How?" I asked.

"I do not know. But—college here seems young after Europe. I do not feel like a boy, and many of the studies there seem absurd to me. I have already read, for my own entertainment, many of the books they study, and I

have read a good many of the books our lectures are made out of. I am making good friends and all that sort of thing—but I am not preparing for the life I want—and—we cannot afford it."

This was the time to ask if he wanted to take up new responsibilities, but I did not. Somehow I understood Robert. He soothed my nerves as no other child of mine ever did. In some vague way I felt that he was to be trusted with his own destiny. And I trusted my own instincts. Given certain premises, certain results are bound to follow. This is no haphazard world.

I did not mention the story Genevieve had told me to him, but she did. He met it with a laugh, and a "Who knows? Mrs. Wallingford is a charming woman, but she wouldn't look at a chap like me."

"If she did," said my daughter, "you would both starve to death. You couldn't very well live on a fire-escape even if it were twined with morning glories."

One morning soon after, I heard Genevieve say that she had received a message from Mrs. Dodds and was going to join her for a restaurant dinner. She drove away in the han-

som she had sent for, looking very sophisticated and like a fashion-plate in her black cloth gown with an enormous bunch of violets pinned to the plain corsage. It went through my mind idly that the violets must have come from somewhere, because it was quite outside of character for Genevieve to buy flowers. Heredity is a curious thing. Genevieve was masterful in many ways, but she had some small, mean economies, and she was intensely practical. She saw no reason for having a fresh napkin at every meal, nor a fresh towel at every bath. Nor was it possible for me to insist upon a bath for her every morning. They had not demanded that at her convent, and there was no inherent daintiness in her that required it. But Genevieve was in the back of my mind now.

Robert and I sat down to dinner alone, and I let him talk on in his gentle well-bred way of the new pictures at Durand-Ruel's, of the dozens of light scraps of nonsense which he heard, heaven knows how, for he went out very little and belonged to no clubs. He had devoted himself almost exclusively to Mrs. Wallingford.

We took our coffee cups and went into the

library and I enjoyed the pleasure of looking at the light falling on his handsome blonde head with its good contour, its carriage of assurance. I was at work on the story of Mrs. Wallingford then, and I wanted to talk to him about it but that I did not dare.

Suddenly he stopped stirring his coffee and put it down untasted.

"How about Genevieve and Babcock?" he asked abruptly. "Does he truly want to marry her?"

"I do not know," I said. "It may be; it doubtless is one of those affairs in which a man will do anything to gain a woman, but if he fails he will pretend to himself that he never was truly in earnest. He isn't a continental. He is very much American—New Yorker. He will never tell me he wants to marry Genevieve until he has told her and it is all arranged. I do not believe either that Babcock cares to be rejected."

"Where is Genevieve?"

"With Mrs. Dodds."

"Do you mind telephoning up there and discovering if she is?"

I sat up straight in my chair. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I saw Ward in town this afternoon, and he avoided me."

"Why should he?"

"That's it, why should he?"

"Robert," I said, "you do not mean to insinuate that Genevieve and Chester Ward would meet anywhere? Why should they? Chester can come here."

"He may not care to."

"Why?"

Robert shrugged his shoulders. "I am sure I do not know. But I imagine that a man and woman like Genevieve and Ward would be happier unrestrained."

"What do you mean?"

"I hardly know what I mean, but when he is here you plainly show that you do not care to leave those two together, and it seems to me that they like to be together."

"Why shouldn't they say so? I should rather that they married each other—I suppose it will come to that—than to meet like this."

"I am not at all sure that they want to marry each other. Does Genevieve seem to you the sort of girl to whom marriage, particularly marriage to a man like Ward, would appeal? Can you imagine Genevieve living in a Washington

third-class hotel with two or three children, or down in West Virginia?"

"But Chester is getting along in the world"—I stopped. What was the use of arguing with Robert concerning his sister. I went to the telephone and asked to speak with Mrs. Dodds. She had gone to Lakewood that morning, one of her servants replied.

I hesitated at the telephone, wondering whether or not to tell Robert. Could it do any good to ruin all his faith in his sister? Would he be clever enough to stick to her even though he knew that she was—what? A liar anyway.

When I came back into the library Robert was walking up and down, his hands in his pockets. The expanse of white in his evening dress was very becoming to him.

"My dear," I said, "I fear that you are in a bad atmosphere."

"And why?"

"You are generalizing—going too readily from the special example you happen to know—"

"Was she with Mrs. Dodds?"

"Certainly," I answered.

"I beg her pardon," he said.

I debated also whether or not I should tell Genevieve what I knew. I hated the thought of it. But here was something we could not run away from. As a matter of fact running away is always useless. A character cannot be run away from. We carry the weaknesses which make new failings along with us.

Genevieve came in after eleven o'clock, and I followed her into her bed-room. I knew that anywhere else she would leave me. I opened the conversation at once. She was a little flushed, her violets faded and sagging from her corsage, shadows under her eyes. I wonder how many mothers have faced that aspect in a daughter.

"I allowed Robert to believe that you were with Mrs. Dodds," I said. She started and then she laughed.

"That was good of you—if it made any sort of difference."

"If you want to see Chester Ward, why do you not see him here?"

She sat down, crossed her knees, scratched a match on the sole of her shoe and lighted a cigarette.

"Because I wanted to dine out with him, without discussion, I suppose."

"And why do you suppose——"

"Oh, pshaw, what's the use! Chester and I suit each other. You do not want him here; you show it plainly. He isn't the sort you want around." I could feel myself growing cold.

"Do you want to marry him?"

"Ah—that's a different thing. I am not sure that I care to marry anybody."

"But"—I spoke as reasonably and calmly as I could—"it is necessary that you should marry. It is not a pleasant thing to call your attention to that necessity, but then marriage is the natural, the happiest destiny for a woman."

Genevieve looked at me oddly through the smoke that wreathed her face.

"Do not believe it. Not one woman in a million wants to be married—wants a husband. She marries for freedom—and—I fancy you have heard the other theories on the subject." She leaned down and unfastened her shoes, kicking them off, and showing her well-shaped foot in its open-work stocking.

"Genevieve," I said gravely, "we are poor, and it is necessary for us to understand each other. I cannot let you make a wreck of your

life. If you do not care for a conventional life let us give up trying. If you want to marry Chester Ward—if it is your ambition to spend the rest of your life in boarding-houses with him, marry him and be done with it. I shall send for him to-morrow and tell him so."

To my amazement, Genevieve sprang up, her face scarlet. "That you shall not do. I will not be flung at any man's head. We are not in France."

"Oh, then," I said, "he has not done you the honor to ask you to marry him? It is for that reason he does not come here. I think there is all the more reason for my seeing him."

"I tell you, if you speak to Chester Ward about me I shall leave this house, and you will be sorry the last day you live."

"You have given me reason for being that already," I said. I am sure I was not wise. There must have been a way to approach my child. But I did not know it. I was astounded at the turn affairs had taken, and running through my mind was a wonder at Chester. Genevieve became a poorer thing than I had thought her, when he did not want to marry her.

I wrote to Chester the next day; I asked him over to dinner. He came, and watching them, I could but believe that these two felt a strong attraction for one another. Genevieve was unlike herself. I could see that she wanted to keep me away from him. And continually between them were those glances, those movements which betray the closest intimacy.

It was with dismay that I realized our situation. What possibility had I of extricating ourselves? There is no combination of circumstances which can ruin a human being unless they have their inception in his own personality. Genevieve was, practically speaking, my own personality. It was for her I worked. Her success was mine; her failure and disgrace were my failure and disgrace. I suppose I hated her as a drunkard hates his uncontrollable vice. And yet I must save her.

## XXIII

*I Make a Discovery*

Chester's attitude toward Genevieve puzzled me. I know that there are some men who have so little respect for themselves that when a woman begins to admire or love one of them, he immediately despises her, considers her of poor taste and judgment for setting up in her heart what he knows to be so poor a thing. But after seeing Genevieve and Chester together I could not believe that this was true of him. There was something else. Chester seemed to be fond of Genevieve, to have an affection, a friendship for her. There is a reason for every departure from the normal, the usual. A brook does not alter its current unless there is an obstruction in the way. If one could only know, how often we should change our feelings toward some sinner! A little sin away back in the beginning may change the current of a life.

There was, too, something apologetic in Chester's attitude toward me. And Genevieve loved him—I could see that she did. Whatever

her flippancy of speech might be, I saw that here, if ever, was the solvent for her hard nature; because it is the truth that our own feelings, our own emotions are what save us or undo us. The inspirers of our moods have little to do with it. Hate is as corrosive to the spirit when the object is bad as when it is good. Love—true affection—when by chance it is found, expands even such a nature as Genevieve's.

I felt sure, too, that Genevieve had not told Chester of my discovery. Her reluctance to do so, the difficulty she must have found in doing so, was the first womanly trait I had ever seen in her.

But, how long would it last—even though the obstacle could be removed? And what was that which made them hide their affection instead of flaunting it? Genevieve was surely not so worldly wise.

Naturally, in this crisis (and it was a crisis—I had spent money which I could not afford; I was handicapping us for all time) I thought of the newspaper as a weapon. I had something to work upon in Genevieve's affection for Chester. It was necessary to kill that if I could. It was a luxury we could not afford.

I sighed sometimes with sorrow for her, and sometimes with relief that she had had it. Kill it once, and the barren soil of her heart would never grow love again. Love was, I reasoned, with a woman like her, but a short-lived thing at best, and it would die, as it dies in many a woman after her life is ruined. This is the wrong view to take, of course, but it is so full of reason that at least one great philosopher reduced it to rule and formula. People who read novels are seldom acquainted with the writings of Schopenhauer, but I think some of the great novelists must have had great respect for his theories. Reason is so seldom romantic.

My first idea was very crude. I would write a newspaper article about Chester, connecting his name with that of another woman. Genevieve was of the cheap temperament that is easily inflamed and would be full of jealousy.

And then, rejecting that, I saw presently what to do. I wrote a letter to one of the newspapers and told them that Chester Ward of Washington, "a club and society man," the nephew and cousin of various distinguished Virginians, was secretly meeting a well-known Washington woman of international reputation.

There was "a story in it," which I was prepared to write, if their clever young men in Washington would substantiate my "tip." I signed this "Mary Clay," and as I had given them so much "good stuff," they were very glad to do this. They were to watch his apartments, bribe servants, find out the last detail of his life by any means.

For ten days I heard nothing. I concluded that I had been mistaken, that there was nothing tangible to discover. And then the story came.

Since then I have ceased to be astonished. I have discovered that you may take almost any human being and after you have watched him for days you will find something eccentric enough to make a newspaper story by judicious patching here and there.

Here was poor foolish Chester's wrecked life spread out before me.

According to the newspaper's lurid-seeing young men in Washington, Chester was keeping a gambling-house. As a matter of fact, young men met at his rooms for very high play, and cases of wine were sent there for their consumption.

And—Chester had married a chorus girl from

comic opera circles during his first year in Washington, and when she was "off the road," she sometimes assisted in receiving the guests. No wonder he could not marry Genevieve! Nobody knew that the girl was his wife. The paper's young men discovered that.

When I took those facts and made them in a page shocker for a sensational Sunday paper, I trembled as with a chill. My pen would hardly travel across the sheet of white paper. When Robert was a baby, he looked at the primer words they were trying to teach him, and said, "Writing is just pictures of the words we say." The writing I put into that story seemed alive, seemed to look up at me with suggestions of horror.

I thought of Mrs. Ward, and of her sweetness and kindness. She would never say an unkind word of any one, not even a dissipated son of royalty. As I wrote a picture came before me of a summer night in Fowlersburg last year. I sat in the unlighted window in Chester's bed-room the evening after he had left, and his mother lay on the narrow white bed where he had slept through all his boyhood. The moon was full, flooding the quiet street outside, and the yellow honeysuckle that

covered the porches filled the air with a sentimental, old-fashioned sweetness. A half dozen negro boys came by and stopped at the street corner to sing, as they are wont to do in the southern towns. Their plaintive boyish voices went through the lament of "Massy's in th' col', col' groun'." When they went away I found Mrs. Ward weeping as one weeps with a friend.

"I am very much alone" she said, her usually cheerful voice broken. "I have only Chester, but he is so good. It is compensation for loneliness; it keeps me happy to think of the full happy life he is having. Some women have sorrow with their boys."

Could I do it? I said to myself that I could not even as my hand went across the paper, making shameful a story of weakness.

At heart I am a sentimentalist, but I did not dare sacrifice my child to save hers. Why should I?

There was this one chance of saving mine from a present peril, but all my hopes seemed tumbling about me even as I wrote. What can one do with stupidity?

## XXIV

*A Business Interview*

I was terrified, and yet there was something, some sense of tranquillity, deep below my surface disturbance which told me that the day was not lost. What is that sustaining force which holds some of us fast to a course of conduct even when it seems hopeless? Is it our reliance upon the universal plan? It is we to whom the day finally turns—always. People say “a fool for luck.” Have you ever seen a lucky fool? I never have.

Sunday morning brought the story of Chester's marriage in naked type, with his picture and that of his wife in the center of the page surrounded by the emblems of chance. The hideousness of it nauseated me. I hid the paper away at first, and then I allowed it to be carried up to Genevieve with the rest of her Sunday morning literature. What it meant to her I shall never know. She came down stairs dressed for the street and went out, only coming in to dress and go to a dinner. There is a wall between my child and me which can

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never be pierced; I have no insight into a nature such as hers. I cannot think her thoughts.

Sometimes when I have been in the midst of despising a personality, a wave of humility has swept over me, and I wonder. I try to have a clear vision, to be honest, to see the real. But I must see through *my* eyes with *my* brain and nerves. I have so often verified my judgment of people that I have grown to accept it. Like everybody else I admire my own point of view—my own opinions. There is no mind which deserves the name which does not; for if we did not like our own opinions we should change them and get another set. But after all, understanding is much a thing of tranquil nerves. There is some aura, some vibration, some electrical force, perhaps, from one person we each know, which disturbs us. When that comes it dazzles our vision, and we love or hate for the same reason that we love or hate at any time; for that we are supremely comfortable or supremely uncomfortable. Some unfortunates cannot distinguish the difference between the two states. My daughter Genevieve made me supremely uncomfortable. I could not penetrate her mind because I was turned back at its very

portals. She was all outside to me. I penetrated her nature as I might have peeled an onion, finding always an outer skin.

The next day found me undecided—I seemed waiting. I looked at Robert and wondered if he, too, was to disappoint me. Suppose my judgment of him were wrong and he was after all only a young man whose fancy was taken by an older woman? Suppose all my plans should come to the cheap end of my son being the husband of a woman like Mrs. Wallingford. And my daughter—I shuddered to think of my daughter's possibilities.

For two days she was hardly in the house. Whether or not she saw Chester Ward in that interval I never knew.

On Wednesday morning she came to me. There was a hard look in her eyes and around the corners of her mouth, and she was deadly pale.

"I want to go to Europe—leave here," she said. She seated herself on a small chair by my desk, and made her request as one might ask possibilities of a lawyer.

"My dear," I began. She brought her tight fist in its walking glove down upon the corner of my desk with force.

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"Don't 'my dear' me!" she said furiously. "You hold the family money. I want enough to take me to Paris."

"And what will you do there?"

She looked at me for a moment with something like malice trying to break through the tragedy in her face. "Enjoy myself," she said finally.

"Genevieve," I said, "as soon as I can I will dispose of this house and we shall go. But—there is no money—to-day."

"You can always get whatever you want. Get it," she said.

A few moments later I heard her go out. I sat in my own room and my thoughts were not pleasant thoughts.

An hour afterward Emelie came in with a card. I read the neat unostentatious script as though "Mr. William B. Clancy" called upon me once a week. It was only at the drawing-room door that fear came.

I found him sitting in the easiest chair in the room, a pair of eyeglasses, which were on a black ribbon around his neck, held in a hand which was too dainty and long-fingered for a man of his bulk. That imaginative hand was a traitor which told secrets.

When I entered, slipping in, he arose and balanced himself so that his lameness was not visible.

"I shall ask you to pardon my unannounced visit," he said with ceremony, "I hope my reasons for coming may be my excuse."

I shivered. Could it be possible—his reputation for boldness was unparalleled—that he was going actually to speak of Mrs. Wallingford? Was he going to threaten? There are some things that seem almost romantic as long as they are covered in roses, but held up to view, defined in words, they become ghastly, miserable. I drew into a shell of reserve, I shrunk, I was a timid little woman. I made him no reply, but simply a little bow with what Prolmann once called my "pathetic smile."

"You have, I understand, large tracts of West Virginia coal land," he said abruptly, "and a railroad concession leading to it."

I almost laughed in my relief. "I have a large tract of land which I believe contains coal."

"It is a well-founded belief. Do you wish to sell it?"

"I do not."

"Good!" he said. "I had heard that you

desired to hold it, and in any case I should have advised you to do so. The property will be very valuable when it is developed. A syndicate, of which I am a member, is about to open up that part of West Virginia, although the project has not yet been made public. It is for that reason that I have asked to speak to you personally. I felt that we could rely upon your discretion."

"You can," I said, and as I said it I realized that this man's agents had sifted my story from beginning to end. And I exulted in it. At any rate, here was one person who did not believe me altogether a fool. Tears of self-pity tried to find their way to my eyes, while I despised myself that I was so feminine a thing.

"We wished to propose an arrangement by which we could take over your property and develop it upon a basis of profits. The country is greatly depressed now, but this condition cannot last. The pendulum goes so far in one direction and then comes back again. When the moment comes it will have an enormous impetus, and it is rational to prepare for it."

"What do you propose?" I asked. To the bottom of my consciousness I was disturbed. *Why?* Why was this man going so far from

his usual methods? Nothing gives me such impatience as a lack of understanding. When I have read the fairy stories of people who had three wishes, or even one wish, magically gratified, it has always been a wonder to me that nobody ever begged for perfect understanding. Think what it would be *to know!*

Could it be that he was bribing me to take Robert away—putting me upon my honor? It was to Robert that I had expected advances to be made, and never anything like this.

I know that those who are instructed in life by sentimental novels will say that naturally Mr. Clancy would lose interest in Mrs. Wallingford when she showed that she no longer cared for him, that she was infatuated with a boy—which only goes to show how little historical novelists know their history. It was Mrs. Wallingford that he was fighting for, that he was using his diplomacy, his power, to bring back to himself, I felt sure.

He gave me a plan for the development of the property. He would pay me a percentage upon all the coal taken out, and would agree to take out so many tons a year for a term of fifty years. I hardly heard what he said. I was waiting for what came at last.

"I suppose you would like to have an agent of your own upon the premises?"

"Yes," I said.

"Your son? Has he finished college?"

"Yes."

"If you will ask him to call upon me, I should be glad to talk the matter over with him. The development of that property is a great opportunity for a young man."

"Yes," I said.

I bowed to him in his formal departure, and sat down with my head in my hands. I was not ready to comprehend.

When Robert came in I sent for him at once. I felt that the bargain was not concluded until he had given his consent to go. I saw that he held an evening paper in his hand, with a look of gravity in his face, but after I had spoken for a moment he put down the paper and rang the bell.

"Bring me a *carafe* of water and some whiskey," he said to Emelie. I looked at him astonished. He, who hardly touched a glass of claret at dinner.

"It is not for me," he said when it came. "It is for you. You have looked like death for days."

But I pushed the stuff away with disgust. I loathe the sight of it.

"Do you not think it would be well to go down there and develop the property?" I asked after I had told the story.

Robert poured out some whiskey and drank it, and smiled at me.

"Genevieve wants to go to Europe," I began.

"I wonder," he said gaily, "if Clancy would put me up at the Union Club."

"There is a long waiting-list there," I said stupidly. I wondered if the boy were a fool, after all.

"And, I wonder, my dear mother, if he will not ask us to dinner."

"But it is a question of your going to West Virginia. I will go down with you and"—my mind was working slowly—"stay with Mrs. Ward."

Robert reached for the paper he had brought in.

"It would be too bad to bury oneself in West Virginia when one may enjoy the advantages of New York." He smiled at me. "I hear that Mr. Van Nest is coming home."

"But,"—I tried to expostulate.

Robert looked at me suddenly with a flash of understanding in his face that I had seen there once before.

"You think Clancy is *giving* you money. Mother, that property is worth millions. It is necessary to their plans. Father must have been a prophet to see so far ahead. Let me arrange the details of the working of the property. We shall all be millionaires, and I do not believe you want to go to West Virginia. Mrs. Ward killed herself yesterday on account of that story about Chester."

And then, for the first time in my life, I lost control of my senses and fainted dead away

## XXV

*We Arrive*

The rest of the story is entirely commonplace. We were really rich. No more lies, no more mean ways. I took Genevieve abroad, and Babcock followed and married her. It has been as happy as most marriages. Robert stayed behind and managed our affairs, and married Mr. Clancy's niece, Mrs. Thomas' daughter. A month later Mr. Van Nest married Mrs. Wallingford, with the result that one of his daughters never spoke to him again, but all the rest of society remembered that it had always loved her. What comedy was played before these things came about, only Robert could tell.

Jane, young, an heiress, brought up abroad, with the best connections, naturally married into the nobility. She needed none of my offices.

Chester Ward divorced his wife, and, seemingly without the least difficulty, married a western girl with great wealth. They were at

Kiel on their yacht this summer, enjoying the usual Imperial attentions.

And as I sit here, there is just one thing that my heart aches over. The money was there all the time! Lucile might have married Julien, and those little French children might have played among the old marbles at Verrière. There was where my faith and heart failed me, and I can never forgive myself.

You may not be able to forgive me elsewhere. My road has not always been flower-strewn, nor always free from mud. But—I am here!

Some of you will put down this page with expressions of disgust, and yet,—you have followed me! The best proof that I am not altogether alien to you is the fact that we are here together.











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